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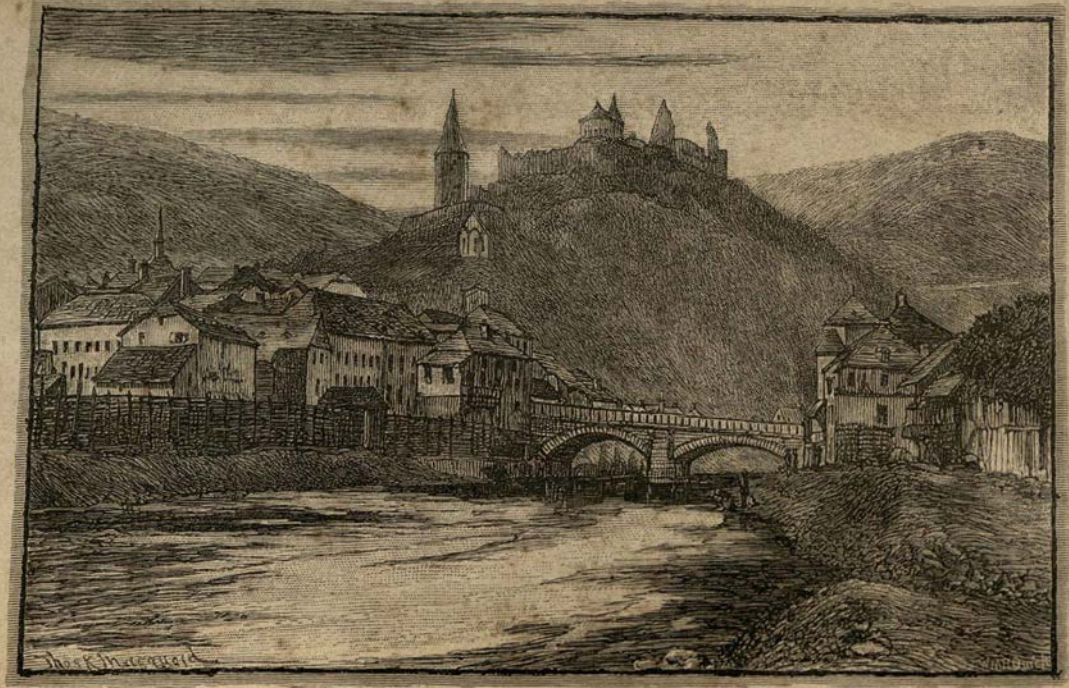

TOWN AND CASTLE OF VIANDEN.

IN THE ARDENNES

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BY

KATHARINE S. MACQUOID

AUTHOR OF 'PICTURES AND LEGENDS FROM NORMANDY AND BRITTANY,' 'THROUGH NORMANDY,' 'THROUGH BRITTANY,' ETC.

WITH FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS BY THOMAS R. MACQUOID

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London

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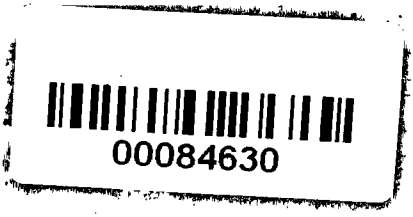

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TO

E. F. G.

This record of a happy journey is dedicated to you, dear Fellow-traveller, who first suggested these rambles in the Ardennes, and then took so delightful a part in them.

THOMAS & KATHARINE MACQUOID.

STANLEY PLACE, CHELSEA,
December 1880.

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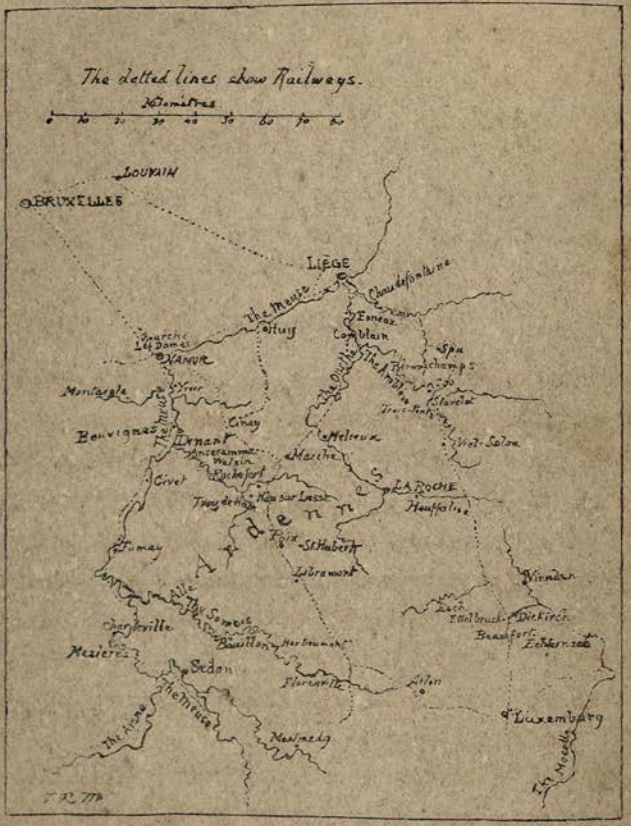


Sketch-Map of the Ardennes.

IN THE ARDENNES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THIS book is not intended as a guide-book through the Belgian Ardennes, nor is it in any sense as complete in its information about this delightful and unfrequented province as *Through Normandy* is about Normandy. It is simply the record of a most picturesque journey taken through a part of the Ardennes last autumn, and it is hoped that this record of the knowledge therein gleaned with some difficulty may help other travellers in journeying through this beautiful region—so much overlooked by travellers.

For the Ardennes is comparatively an unknown country, and is likely to remain so—so far as the more wealthy tourist is concerned—for excepting at Spa, there are no luxurious hotels or gay towns to spend money in. But the walking traveller who delights in beautiful

country, and who does not object to a humble though clean inn at the end of his day's journey, will find the Ardennes a mine of unvisited loveliness, and as he wanders among its green valleys, between ranges of lofty hills, or climbs its strangely shaped rocky heights which seem to turn abruptly from one another, as the sparkling river flowing at their feet takes one of its sudden curves, he will find at every eight or ten miles' distance (often much nearer) some quiet village or town nestling under the shelter of the rocks, and offering him a good supper and bed. Almost without exception we found good bread and butter, coffee and eggs, throughout the Ardennes, trout and écrevisses from the river, ham made from the wild boar of the country, and plenty of roast meat, though in the country places this, as in the Tyrol, is frequently veal. Potatoes are liberally served, often two or three times during a meal, and other vegetables are plentiful. In the smaller places very good light beer is included in the bill of fare, free of charge. The beds were invariably clean and good, and the people hospitable, frank, and willing; very different from their Flemish neighbours in the matter of exaction. The Jesuit Berthollet, writing in 1742, gives a very true picture of the Ardennais of to-day. "There is perhaps no more humane people,

and spite of a certain rusticity common to all country people, and even to those who cultivate the finest provinces of France, the Ardennais may pride themselves on their sincerity, their good faith, their kindness and friendly qualities—they are good servants of God and of the Church, they think well of every one. These are qualities which are certainly not possessed by every nation."

The Walloons seem to begin at Namur, and are as different as possible from their Flemish neighbours. The peasants speak what is called Walloon, the ancient French idiom, which, according to some writers, is the ancient Gallic language. A line traced from Calais to Verviers by way of St. Omer, Lille, and Tournai, is said to mark the limits of this language, but no satisfactory etymology has been given of the word Walloon. It may, like Wales—Galles—be only a corruption of Gallois. The Walloons are a good-looking race, and quite French in their joyous liveliness. The Walloon guard of the kings of Spain was thus called because it was raised in Walloon Flanders.

In some ways they are like the Bretons. They are not reserved and taciturn, but the cottages near the Semois reminded us much of Breton cottages—children, pigs, and fowls living together very happily, with squalor

reigning around. Legends abound, but they differ from those of Brittany. The element of witchcraft is paramount, and there is an absence of poetry and mysticism; the ideas are coarser and more material. The Nuton takes the place of the poulpican, and the true fairy of the malignant Korrigan, though there are real fairies in some of the Breton legends; but the favourite character in the legends of the Ardennes is the Evil One. He is always appearing either as the tormentor of saints, or the tempter of sinners. Sometimes he personates a wolf, or even a smaller animal; but he is always working woe. Hidden treasure is an ever-present theme, and the Gatte d'Or, a goat with hoofs and horns of gold who guards this treasure, is to be heard of in many places.

Till we began to plan our route I do not think we quite knew the limits of the Ardennes, and I believe people as a rule do not know much about its exact position.

Luxembourg (a part of Belgian Luxembourg, and also the Duchy) occupies the centre of the Ardennes, which reaches to Spa and Liège on the north, and to the French frontier on the south. This Ardennes was once an enormous forest, and is said to take its name from two Celtic words, *Ard* and *Duen*, signifying height

and depth, the height of its level above surrounding countries and the depth of its forests. This famous forest is mentioned by Cæsar, Tacitus, Strabo, and other ancients, and contained the greater part of Belgian Gaul. Little by little trees have been cut down, lands cultivated, and towns built, but still the forest character remains; and in looking back on the Ardennes, one calls up a picture of lofty hills either wooded or broom-clothed, winding brawling streams, with dense tracts of forest, fringed by heathery wastes.

Julius Cæsar says of this forest: "It reaches from east to west, from the Rhine nearly to the Rhone; from south to north it comprehends the territory of the Trevirenses and stretches away to the ocean;" "so that this huge forest," says Berthollet, "stretched over the lands of the archbishoprics of Trêves, Cologne, and Mayence; the bishoprics of Liège and of Metz; the Duchies of Lorraine, Luxembourg, Limbourg, Juliers, Brabant; the counties of Namur, Hainaut, Flanders, and Artois. There is comparatively little left of this forest, though by the special bounty of the common Father of believers, great and small game, mines of various metals, cattle, horses, wheat and barley, oats and rye, and vintages, seem to have been given to recompense the inhabitants of the Ardennes for the

sterility of an ungrateful soil, and to put them on a level with the people of other countries. Even in the time of Cæsar, it was inhabited by various tribes of barbarians, who could raise an army of from 300,000 to 400,000 fighting-men."

Spite of the immense extent of forest, and the Celtic inhabitants of the country, Druid worship does not appear to have prevailed. Diana, according to some writers, was the chief divinity of the forest of Arden—a fitting prototype of St. Hubert. In the Pantheon at Rome there was a statue of the goddess with the legend Diana Arduinnæ. The third Bishop of Trêves, St. Maternus, was the Christian apostle of the Ardennes. He broke in pieces at Dinant an image of Diana, which the inhabitants worshipped in the cleft of a rock, and there founded the church. Some writers deny this, and say the image broken was an idol called Nam. Maternus was the first Bishop of Tongres, which See, till the death of St. Lambert, held the supremacy afterwards exercised by Liège.

In the sixth century, the country of Ardennes contained, towards the south, east, and west, all the country now called Luxembourg, and even the lands beyond it so far as the river Meuse.

Wanbert, son of that Wanbert who alone of the

children of Clodion, son of Pharamond, escaped being massacred by Clovis, by the advice of the Emperor Justinian, recovered some of the lands of his proscribed family in Belgian Gaul, and was created Count of Ardenne. This country comprised the Marquisate of Artois, the Provostry of Luxembourg, and all lands situated near the rivers Elz, Wilz, Ouren, Ourl, Emblève, Semois, Lesse, and a part of the Sure.

Till the beginning of the thirteenth century coal seems to have been unknown in Belgium ; but in the reign of Albert de Cuyck the feeding of the forges of Liège had so diminished the forests around the city that wood had become scarce and dear. One day a blacksmith who lived in the Rue de Coché was groaning over his work when there came along the street a tall, old, gray-bearded man. He stopped and looked at the blacksmith. "God be with you, my friend," he said, "and bring your work to a profitable issue."

"Profit do you say," groaned the blacksmith ; "that is not likely, my good friend. All the profit I reap one day I have to disburse the next to buy charcoal to feed my forge."

The old man smiled, then he bent his gray head over the grumbling blacksmith.

"Listen, friend," he said ; "go to the mountain on

which stands the Abbey, and take with you a strong pickaxe, dig, and you will find deep in the hill-side a hard black earth. Feed your forge with this instead of with charcoal, and your iron will heat twice as well."

Then he departed as suddenly as he had come.

The blacksmith went and told all his neighbours, and they all took pickaxes that very day to the hill on which the Abbey stood, and found, as the old man had said, an abundance of black earth which heated their furnaces as no furnaces had ever heated iron before. It is said that the word houille in the Liègeois dialect comes from the blacksmith, whose real name was Halloz. Some writers affirm that the old man was an angel, others that he was simply an English traveller, coal having been used in England as early as 1145.

It is curious that Liège should still be so famed for the manufacture of firearms and other warlike instruments, and Namur for cutlery and other metal-work; for the Romans caused swords, shields, and other weapons, to be made in the Ardennes, where they seem to have found valuable metal-mines and skilful workmen. Till 1466, when Philip of Burgundy, called the Good, so barbarously destroyed the town of Dinant, it was, with its rival Bouvignes, renowned for the production of works of art in brass and copper called Dinanteries

some of these very curious relics still exist in Brussels, Liège, and other towns.

The Dukes of Burgundy seem to have been in constant warfare first with one city or castle, then with another, till the Ardennes was annexed to the German Empire. At the French Revolution it changed masters; but since the Revolution of 1830 the greater part of the province, that is to say the Belgian Ardennes, has been given up by France, and is under the government of King Leopold. However, by the treaty of 1865, the Duchy of Luxembourg was given to the King of Holland, who is its Grand Duke, and governs it by a viceroy, Prince Henry. At the station called Trois Vierges, on the railway from Spa to Luxembourg, one passes into the Grand Duchy in which is the German Ardennes.

In taking a journey through the Ardennes, Dinant is the best town to begin from. The following route may be found useful:—

BRUSSELS TO NAMUR.—NAMUR TO DINANT BY STEAMER.

DINANT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

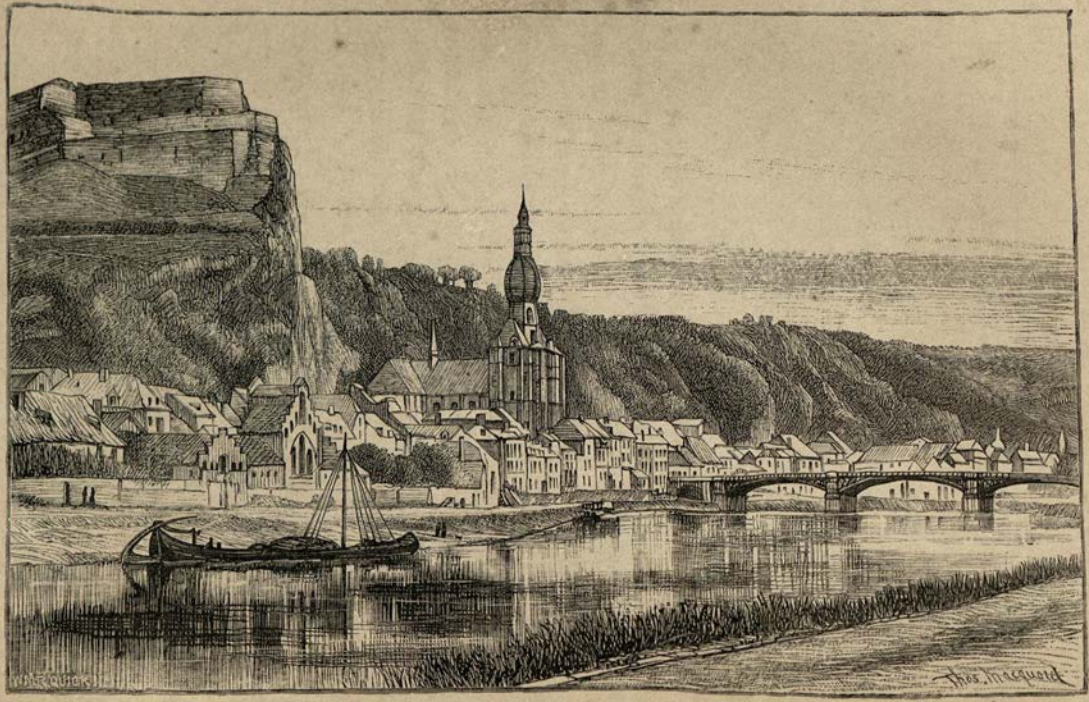
To Bouillon by Givet and Sedan, or by carriage or diligence to Gedinne, and then a walking tour can be taken up the valley of the Semois to Bouillon. Explore

the valley of the Semois towards its source as far as Florenville, ruins of Abbaye d'Orval, Chiny, etc.

Railway from Florenville to Poix. Omnibus to St. Hubert. Either drive through the forest to La Roche, or drive to Marche, and then by train to Melreux-Hotton, where there is a correspondance three times a day for La Roche.

La Roche and the Ourthe.

From La Roche drive to Houffalize. Houffalize to Gouvy, a station on Spa and Luxembourg railway. Gouvy to Trois Ponts or Stavelot. From Trois Ponts or Stavelot drive to Coo. Drive from Coo to Remouchamps through the valley of the Amblève—then drive by Aywaille to Comblain-au-Pont. From Comblain explore the valley of the Ourthe by Barvaux to Durbuy—from Durbuy to Huy—Huy by Liège and Chaudfontaine to Spa—from Spa to Diekirch—Diekirch, Vianden, Echternach and its environs—Beaufort, Luxembourg, Trêves.



DINANT ON THE MEUSE.

CHAPTER II.

TO DINANT.

BRUSSELS looked very bright and sparkling when we reached it at about five o'clock on a glowing afternoon in August. In London we had left dull, gloomy weather, but when we reached Dover we found sunshine, and our passage across in the delightful *Calais-Douvres* was an enjoyment instead of an endurance. The sunshine grew brighter as we went on, and when we reached Brussels, the gay, well-kept little city was bathed in afternoon brilliance. By the time we had dined at the comfortable Hotel de Suéde this glow had faded—when we went out to look at the town the lamps were being lighted. Brussels was very empty—there were a few English tourists, but it was evidently vacation time; every one had gone to the country or the sea-side, so that we could gaze our fill into the charming shop windows in the Galerie St. Hubert and the Montagne de la Cour without being jostled by passers-by. It soon

grew dark, and the shops shut early in this quarter of Brussels. The massive towers of Saint Gudule loomed out in solid darkness as we passed, and the splendid Hotel de Ville looked more picturesque than ever—perhaps, however, its most interesting aspect was early next morning, when the Place in front sparkled and glowed with a profusion of brilliant blossoms in the flower market. The contrast was perfect between the ancient dark building and the fresh summer beauty below.

The journey from Brussels to Namur is not remarkable. At La Hulpe we were told that we ought to see the Lion Mound at Waterloo, but we did not see it. However, the approach to Namur, and the first view of the town and citadel, are very striking. We were much amused by our fellow-travellers, two little Belgian girls and their mother. They had all heavy Flemish faces, and the legs of the little girls, amply displayed by their short white embroidered frocks, were a sight to see. They had each wreaths and books, and they told us the distribution of prizes had taken place that morning. They were going home to Dinant to spend their holidays. One of them was rather pretty, and though only eight years old, she recited from beginning to end a French play in which she had acted a part that morning.

Namur is a bright, pretty little town, with a most

excellent Inn, Hotel de Harschamps. The view from the citadel over the Meuse is very fine, and there may be more to see in the town than we discovered there, but we were anxious to get on to Dinant and then to the Ardennes.

A steamer runs in summer-time three times a day between Namur and Dinant; it takes longer than the railway journey, but on a fine day is very preferable, and it is never tedious, there is so much to admire in the constant beauty and change of the scenery. Limestone cliffs on either side rise to a considerable height; they are frequently wooded to the top; and in some places we saw hop-gardens on their steep sides, but often the bare gray crag projects itself in varied and fantastic forms, with tufts of grass and wild flowers niched in the crevices of stone.

The cliffs do not always tower loftily on each side of the lovely gray-green river, though sometimes they frown at one another closely, and when a sudden bend comes we are enclosed in a rocky valley from which there seems to be no outlet. All at once the scene widens, the cliffs on one side or other change into sloping banks, green and gold some way off, with cultivated tracts of corn and meadow land, and nestling close to the brink of the river is first one pretty village and then another.

There are several of these villages, and the constant windings of the Meuse keep up a succession of pictures and also a keen interest as to the sort of landscape which lies beyond the point ahead of us. There were plenty of passengers—some tradespeople, others working men—going to Dinant, or landing at the little villages: we had an old farmer and his wife, with their calf, about which they seemed most solicitous. It behaved much better than a little Christian in boy's clothes did, who wandered about in a reckless fashion and kept us in constant expectation that he would fall overboard.

The railway crosses the river at Yvoir, the cliffs are very high and the ruined castle of Poilvache frowns down from the top of them. There is a landing-place at the little village of Houx, just below the ruined castle. The cliff on which Poilvache stands seems to overhang the little village; at its base it recedes in the form of a narrow crescent, so that there is just room for a few vine-covered cottages, a gray school-house, the little church round which the houses cluster, and the château at the farther end. In front of all is the village green, and this slopes down to the river, and is dotted with a few brown cows feeding. We saw no sheep, but as we passed we saw a whole flock of goats leaving the fresh grass beside the water, to clamber up the bare rocks

behind the village for the scanty herbage peeping here and there in the clefts of gray crag. The little village could not be bigger if it would—there is only just room for the road to pass at either end between the steep cliff and the Meuse.

It made a charming picture of rustic leisure. A few

ON THE MEUSE, NEAR DINANT.

men loitered on the landing-place, smoking, and we saw women knitting at the doors of the vine-covered cottages. The rocks looked exquisite here. The conformation of the limestone causes wonderful effects of light and shade as we went on between the lofty cliffs, sometimes green, but oftener thrusting rugged gray shoulders through the scanty grass and wild

flowers. The young harvest moon kissed the crags on the right, and showed brilliantly in the green and olive reflections on the beautiful river. A long green willow-covered island appeared in the middle of the stream; nearer Namur these islands had been more frequent, and now we came in sight of another ruined tower on the heights above Bouvignes on the right bank of the Meuse.

There is a sad story about this ruined tower of Crèvecœur. It seems that the warlike people of Dinant, on the opposite bank, quite unchastened by former disasters, had not only refused to submit to the army of Henry II. of France, but had told the envoys who proposed terms of surrender, that they meant to roast the hearts and livers of the King and the Duke. Of course this infuriated the French, and after wreaking their vengeance on Dinant they attacked Bouvignes.

Three beautiful women had remained in the castle with their husbands, and were shut up with them in the Tour de Crèvecœur. For some time their courage and cheerfulness helped and encouraged the garrison, but one after another all the defenders of the castle perished except the three heroines whom death had spared. They were summoned to surrender, but they would not trust the mercy of the French conquerors, and in full sight

CARES BESIDE THE HOUSE

of the army clamouring below, they flung themselves from the battlements of the castle into the river. This seems impossible, for the hill on which the tower stands is some way from the bank; but it is supposed that the story really relates to another Tower of Crèvecœur, earlier in date, built on the Meuse, and of which no trace now remains. It is certain that every year, on the 8th July, a mass is said in the church of Bouvignes "pour les âmes des dames mortes devant Bouvignes, et en particulier pour celles des dames de Crèvecœur." But we have scarcely time to look at Bouvignes, or to sorrow for the Dames de Crèvecœur, for we are in sight of Dinant, and a lovely sight it is. On the left, high above us, on a lofty overhanging crag, is the gray citadel, and lower down, relieved sharply against this in a darker gray, is the quaint bulbous spire of the church, in itself a fine specimen of Early Gothic. Below the church, and before the eye reaches it, is a series of pictures irregular in height and form, and of many colours—houses, white, blue, green, yellow, with projecting upper stories supported by wooden brackets which look like so many little legs, beside the quay, green vine wreaths stretch across below the windows, and balconies are gay with blossoms. The road runs between these houses and the river, and there are curious little tunnelled passages through the houses

leading to the street behind. Just below one of the balconies, a row of clothes of many colours is drying in the evening light—an old woman close by sits roasting coffee over a pan of glowing charcoal. Beyond the church the overhanging cliff goes on as far as we can see, wooded to the top, and beneath it the town nestles closely in one long street of shops and houses. Close to the church, a bridge spans the river, and through the arches and above them we see the wooded cliff beyond and the houses beneath it. It is said that the singular bulbous spire of the church was originally meant for the bridge, but proving too heavy it was set on to the church. On the right bank the cliffs are lower, and there are fewer houses in this suburb, called St. Medard. Some one points out to us, on the right bank, the Hotel Dieu, a quaint red brick building, standing above the other houses; this is a hospital for the old and sick poor; and on our left we pass the village called Leffe, the College Communal, with its avenue of trees in front, and the Abattoir.

We have reached the landing-place with its broad flight of steps leading to the foot of the bridge.

The railway station is on the other side of the river, in the suburb of St. Medard, and close by it is the Hotel des Postes, which overlooks the Meuse, but we

are not going over the bridge to this Hotel des Postes. Our inn is close to the landing-place and to the Grande Place, in which stands the church of Dinant. The Hotel Tête d'Or is in the main street, and it nestles so closely under the cliff that though one goes up a good long staircase to its first floor one can step out thence into the garden behind.

We went into the courtyard, and were at once charmed with the entrance of the hotel. On the right of the courtyard is a square glass-roofed hall, with large hanging baskets filled with graceful creeping plants; on one side is the salon, on the other the bureau, while behind are the large windows of the salle-a-manger, filled with palms and ferns and flowers, and forming a charming background to this al fresco lounging-place, where the guests of the Tête d'Or read their papers, and play draughts, and knit, and drink their coffee. We breakfast early at the Tête d'Or, and dinner is at one, and supper at seven o'clock. The living is excellent at both meals, and our host's wine has a reputation. We get trout from the Leffe close by, écrevisses from the Meuse, capital poultry from Brussels, good meat, jambon des Ardennes, excellent melons and other fruit, and all at a reasonable charge—7½ francs per day without wine.

The bed-rooms, too, are very comfortable and nicely

kept, and there is a home-like feeling about this inn which makes one loth to leave it. We were much struck by the appearance of our host, a very remarkable Dinantais, Monsieur Disière, the chief échevin of the town of Dinant. He showed us the pictures in his

WIERTZ'S HOUSE, NEAR DINANT.

salon; some of them are by Wiertz, the famous Belgian painter. Wiertz was a native of Dinant, and a near relative of M. Disière; the painter's house still stands in the pretty village of Fonds de Leffe. At supper-time we met the friend to whom we had brought an introduction—one of three young English

artists. Dinant is a favourite place for artists, we find, and our corner of the table d'hôte is a merry one. We sit at the brightest end of the Salle, facing the three large windows that look into the glass-roofed entrance hall, with its pleasant plants and flowers. There are some fine palms on the table, and through a little square hole at this end of the room, the dinner and supper are served. Through this hole we get a glimpse of a bonne putting the last finishing touches to the cool green salad —a most refreshing sight in the midst of the long meal and the hot faces of some of the guests. Opposite us are three most unrefreshing faces—English tourists of a very ordinary kind. The mother, a washed-out looking woman, and the son, a weak-chested, narrow-shouldered invalid, do not seem to possess much character to boast of between them, but the young woman who sits between them, with a copper-coloured skin and a nose like a hat-peg, would evidently like to rule us all—innkeeper included. She is the only drawback to our enjoyment, and she perseveres in sitting opposite our party and grumbling. The other visitors are chiefly Walloons, merry and light-hearted. They are surprisingly unlike the townspeople of Brussels, considering the shortness of the journey that lies between them. The Dinantais are very frank and open-hearted—a good-looking race, with plenty of

fun and sparkle about them. Our host is a fine specimen, tall and broad-chested, with iron-gray hair and beard, and shaggy eyebrows, beetling over deep, bright dark eyes, that are at once full of almost Irish humour and pathos, and his daughters are charming young women.

It is said that the Dinantais have some Irish attributes,—they have a rare faculty of blundering.

It is a matter of history that once upon a time the town of Dinant sent a deputation of its chief citizens, with trumpets blowing and banners flying, to the gates of Namur, where they had been bidden to a conference, but the gate of Namur was too low-browed for the proud banners of Dinant. It never occurred to the worthy Dinantais that these might be lowered, and so the deputation turned back at once, and came home to Dinant.

These warm-hearted Dinantais were proud, too, of their old bridge, and caused this inscription to be put on it—"This bridge was built at Dinant."

Once upon a time the Prince Archbishop of Liège announced his approaching arrival in his good town of Dinant. All the chief inhabitants prepared to do him honour, and the country was scoured to procure the finest venison, the fattest capons, game, and fish. Just before the day of arrival, a fisherman brought in a

salmon which he had caught in his net, of how many pounds' weight is not recorded, but such a salmon as had never before appeared in the waters of the Meuse. There was great rejoicing; this would make a royal dish, worthy even of the Prince Bishop. But alas!, next day arrived a messenger to say that the Bishop's journey was delayed, and that his good town of Dinant need not expect him for a whole week. The town was in despair. What would become of the good cheer provided, and above all, what would become of the salmon? There was no means of keeping it alive; it must be flung back into the Meuse. In this dilemma a Copère (the Dinantais are called Copères and their sayings Copèreries) got up and said: "Listen, fellow-townsmen, I have an idea. Let me fling the salmon back into the Meuse, but let us hang a bell round him, so that when the Prince Bishop arrives he may be found and caught without delay."

But it would have been well for the Dinantais if, in the Middle Ages, they had contented themselves with being absurd. They seem to have been equally pugnacious and arrogant, and they lived in perpetual feud with their neighbours of Bouvignes. At this time Dinant is said to have been a walled city with several gates and eighty-four towers. It excelled in the manu-

facture of what were called Dinanteries, ornamental work in brass and copper. Bouvignes was also celebrated for its copper wares, but these were chiefly useful articles. The rivalry was incessant between the towns, and it is said that the Meuse at this point was a scene of continual strife and bloodshed. The town of Bouvignes was considered impregnable, and to irritate the Dinantais, the Bouvignais built the tower of Crève-cœur. In opposition, the people of Dinant built the tower of Mont Orgueil, and from these two fortresses incessant warfare was carried on. At last the Duke of Burgundy caused Mont Orgueil to be razed to the ground. Some years after the Dinantais, having rebuilt their tower, received orders to demolish it. They resisted, but were forced to submit; but five-and-twenty years later they heard that the Burgundians had been defeated by the people of Liège, and they thought the time had come to wipe out the memory of this indignity. They went in procession to Bouvignes with an effigy of Charles, then Count of Charolais, hung to a gallows. "Here," they said, "is the pretended son of our duke, whom the king of France will hang as we have hung him here; he is but a bastard—the son of the Bishop of Liège;" and to this they added other insults.

Unluckily the Dinantais had made a mistake. It

was the people of Liège who had been defeated, and the Burgundians were victorious, and now thirty thousand men commanded by the insulted Charolais (afterwards Charles the Bold) came marching on Dinant, burning to revenge the affronts which the foolish townsmen had offered to the honour of Burgundy. The old duke Philip even followed his army borne in a litter. His duchess had sworn that she would ruin Dinant and put all the inhabitants to the sword, be the cost what it would.

At this time Dinant was a very important city, the second in the province of Liège, and the Liègeois sent reinforcements and promised the Dinantais large succour. Some of the townspeople were inclined to submission, but by far the greater number were confident in the strength of their defences, and the protection of the king of France.

Charolais took possession of the Abbey of Leffe, now a glass factory, and invested the town. The inhabitants of Bouvignes seem to have been touched by the danger of their rivals, and sent a messenger begging them to submit to the Duke of Burgundy.

The Dinantais hanged the messenger, and continued to insult Philip and his fiery son, till the two princes swore they would raze the town to the ground. Twelve

days later Charles entered the battered town to the sound of the trumpet. Dinant was first brutally pillaged, and then burned—Charles having previously ordered that priests, women, and children should be spared and sent

IN THE TANNERIES, DINANT.

to Liège. This was done, and the poor exiles as they quitted their town gave three heart-breaking cries of farewell. When the town ceased to burn, Charolais issued a manifesto offering daily payment to all the neighbouring peasantry if they would come and finish the destruction of Dinant, so that one stone might not remain on another. A French historian of the fifteenth

century says:—"Dinant was burned down in such a fashion that it looked as if it had been in ruins for a century." The prisoners, 800 in number, were flung into the Meuse and drowned before Bouvignes.

But even this did not subdue the ancient spirit of the Copères. We find them a century later defying the French army. The name Copère is said to come from the Cuivre or copper in which they worked. The vengeance of Philip destroyed this trade. A memory of it remains in the couques, the great specialty of Dinant shop-windows. They are flat brown cakes made of honey and flour, representing, as doubtless the famous copper plaques once did, views of Dinant, groups of flowers and fruit, animals, figures, and birds, all sorts of devices. These couques are hard, and do not break easily, and are exported largely. But Dinant is a very thriving town though it is shorn of its ancient glory. Its tanneries, very quaint and interesting, and its bark mills and woollen manufactories, and its marble and slate quarries, keep the population always employed. It is difficult to reconcile the gentle, good-tempered, kindly people of to-day, with the irritable, vainglorious Dinantais of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER III.

DINANT.

NEXT morning the town looked very bright and tempting in the sunshine as we crossed the Place, with its fruit and vegetable sellers, to the south door of the church on its farther side. We entered under a handsome but mutilated porch. It was a sudden change from the brilliant sunshine outside to the cool gloom within.

It is a very fine and well-preserved church, but its precise date is uncertain. It is said to have been built in the thirteenth century, but much of it was burned at the sack of Dinant, though Charolais tried to save it. It was rebuilt a few years later, and has recently been very well restored, having entirely escaped whitewash. Its specialty consists in being entirely built in dark gray stone and black marble, the bosses of the groining being ornamented with shields bearing the arms of the nobles and rich burghers who have made offerings

to the church. On the right of the nave, down a few steps, is a very interesting baptistery with a circular arch over its altar. This baptistery was a part of an earlier church, the apse of which is said to have been destroyed in 1227, by the falling of a huge block from the granite rock under which the building stands. The font is very curious, of twelfth century work.

Behind the High Altar of the church is a very ancient altar dedicated to St. Perpetuo, Bishop of Tongres in the sixth century. He spent much time at Dinant, and became so attached to it that after his death he wished to be interred there.

There is a curious granite tomb of the fourteenth century, but though there is an inscription on it, it does not seem to be known to whom it was erected. The mother of Wiertz, the famous painter, has presented one of his pictures to the church. There is something very grand and severe about this church : the pure and simple lines of its architecture, the lofty piers and roof, and the total absence of ornament, united to the sombre tone of colour, make it very impressive ; and it is, too, in such complete contrast to the bright little town outside, with its many-coloured houses and gay shop-windows. There were formerly seven other churches in Dinant ; there are still some chapels, but these are not interesting. We

came out of church and went down a long street of excellent shops; half of these seemed to be full of couques of all sorts of shapes and patterns. There were pleasant-faced people in the shops and also in the street, and they gave us friendly smiles, for our kind guide is evidently a popular personage.

We come to narrow lanes in this long street, on one side going down to the river; on the other, to the foot of the falaise that rises behind the houses—up and down these lanes, we get quaint and sometimes lovely bits of view. Through the open doors of shops, and down passages between the houses, we get peeps of the greenest and most charming gardens, sparkling with the scarlet and gold of autumn blossoms.

We came by and by to a larger opening; there was first a roofed courtyard, then a garden, and behind this a group of tall trees clothing the base of the steep falaise behind. Among the trees was on one side a sham stag, and on the other a huge shining ball, in which the wild beauty of the garden was reflected.

A little beyond this we came to the Casino, where concerts and other entertainments are given in the open air. There is a delightful wild park here, up the moss-grown terraced walks of which our friend kindly guided us to the top of the steep falaise. It was an enchanting

walk, and makes in memory a golden background to our recollections of Dinant. Half-way up, we rested on a huge stone bench under a spreading tree, and saw through the wood below glimpses of the busy town and the dark bulbous spire rising far above it. The sun was shining brightly, and flecked the path here and there with golden patches. As we got higher, we left the cool green shadow of these lofty trees. Now we stop to get an exquisite view of the winding river in which the houses below us are reflected; now, again, of the limestone crags jutting out boldly among the pine and birch trees. The variety of our walk seems endless, and each fresh view has a special character of its own. Wild blossoms follow our footsteps; wherever we turn, the path is fringed with gay flowers and wild strawberries, or by the fronds of delicate ferns.

We heard that the flora of Dinant is most varied and contains many rare plants. It seemed to us that we found almost every known autumn wild-flower there. At last we reached the top, and found ourselves among corn and potato fields. There is a little votive chapel here, looking down on the town. Our kind guide led us on along the edge of the overhanging cliffs to the top of a most picturesque garden ingeniously constructed on the side of the rock itself, by means of irregular flights

of steps and terraces. These literally seem to overhang the town, and one gets most charming peeps through the trees and bushes of town and river. We climbed down some almost perpendicular steps into this very original garden, under a perfect bower of vines and other luxuriant climbers. Through these we saw, as we descended, plots of golden sunflowers and flame-coloured lilies showing out among snowy and lilac phloxes, and the more subdued tints of other blossoms. There are vegetables as well as flowers growing on the terraces of soil ingeniously banked up on the side of the perpendicular cliff, and at the foot of each of the flights of steps cut in the rock, leading from one terrace to another, are pleasant arbours made of rustic woodwork, over which vines and the large cool leaves of aristolochia fling down luxuriant arms. All this garden is the work of our host of the Tête d'Or, and it does equal credit to his industry and his ingenuity. It is a pleasant sunny retreat, and Jacko, a big black raven, seems to consider it his kingdom—he struts about as if the place were his own, and stands at the foot of the steps to challenge our passage. Now and then he puts his head on one side, shuts his eyes, and calls out Jacko in a perfectly human voice.* In a cave in the rock in one corner are a pair of blinking

* Alas! Jacko is no more.

eagle owls, very handsome creatures. At the next corner some quaint gaily-coloured plaster figures guard the entrance to a vine-covered bower, where the climber can rest. Lower down in the garden, near the house, we come to a large aviary full of canary birds, among which a pair of pretty brown squirrels seem to live very happily.

The pleasant arbour with the plaster figures in front looked full of cool green shadow as we came down from the brilliant sunshine, and I sat down to write there, thinking I should be safe from interruption in the peaceful pleasant nook. Close by me was a plot of marigolds, the simple old-fashioned flower one so seldom sees, it always reminds me of early days and of "Simple Susan." It is such a beautiful flower, and to-day it reflected the sunshine gorgeously.

But I had not much space in which to meditate on marigolds. I soon heard footsteps, and trotting up the garden path came an old woman with inquiring blue eyes, a bright brown face, and a huge basketful of wet linen in her arms.

She set down her basket beside the arbour, and I went on writing while she shook out serviette after serviette, and hung them to dry on the bushes; but each time she came back to her basket for a fresh supply she gave me a keen look, and her pauses became

longer. I felt that by and by she would begin to talk. At last she had emptied the basket, and then without ceremony she came up to the little table at which I sat.

"Bon jour, Madame," she said smiling, "and what does Madame think of Dinant?"

I answered that I liked it very much.

"Yes," she said, "it is a beautiful town. Mon Dieu! there is not such another anywhere; but it is too gay just now; ma foi! it is spoiled with so many people. There are so many visitors in the hotel, it is hard work to get the serviettes dry by dinner time."

She said there had been a grand office in church last Sunday. I asked if this would be repeated next Sunday.

She nodded, and gave me a sharp look out of her keen blue eyes.

"Yes, yes, Madame," she said, "but I shall not go. I go to la messe often; I like to go, but not as much as I once did. I am of the Liberal party"—here she gave another keen glance to make sure that I understood,—"yes, I am Liberal, and I am just as good a Catholic as some others are," she nodded here with a kind of defiance; "but Monsieur le Doyen does not think so. He despises me, Monsieur le Doyen does; and, Madame, I do not like to be despised. No indeed," she squeezed up her eyes and shrugged her shoulders. "Look you,

Madame," she went on gravely, "there are times when I see Monsieur le Doyen looking at me with contempt, and I feel angry; I feel as if I could give him a box on the ear, but then I could not do it, it would not be convenable."

She stopped suddenly, perhaps she thought she had been indiscreet, for next moment she shouldered her basket. "Pardon, Madame," she said, "I am wasting your time and my own too; au revoir." She nodded, and went down the path towards the house, collecting her serviettes as she went, for some of them were already dry in the intense sunshine.

I inquired and found that the state of religious feeling is the element of discord in this charming little town. There is a Catholic butcher and a Liberal one; and so with all the other trades, and they are at daggers-drawn. The establishment of the Communal College has given dire offence to the clergy, and though they have now been given permission to teach in it, they have refused to do so. They will not take any part in the system unless the whole college is put under ecclesiastical authority. But the Liberals have at present the upper hand in Dinant, and, judging by what one hears, the church partisans seem to have acted with tyranny and want of judgment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHÂTEAU DE WALZIN.

ONE afternoon we drove to the valley of the Lesse, in a comfortable carriage belonging to the inn, with our kind guide and one of his friends. About a mile out of Dinant, on the "rivage," is a quaint old barn, shown in the illustration. The Lesse is another lovely river, which falls into the Meuse at Anseremme.

The first part of our way lay beside the Meuse, beneath the wooded falaises, and about a mile beyond Dinant we reached the famous passage between a group of black perpendicular cliffs on the left, and one lofty upright rock on the river bank, called La Roche-à-Bayard. This takes its name from Bayard, the famous magic horse of Les Quatre fils d'Aymon, who has left other tokens of his presence in the neighbourhood of Dinant, besides the footprint said to be visible on this black rock. Formerly, there seems to have been only a small opening at the bottom of the isolated rock, the

LA ROCHE-À-BAYARD.

top forming a part of the cliff beside it, but one night towards the close of the seventeenth century, an aerolite fell on the top of the rock, and changed it in a moment to its present monolithic condition. Some years later, Louis XIV. ordered the opening below to be extensively widened to admit the freer passage of his troops and their artillery waggons from Dinant. The isolated rock stands up in such abrupt grandeur that one seems to expect to hear that either a convulsion of nature or man's handiwork has been instrumental in producing this singular chasm.

The view from this point of the junction of the two rivers is delightful. The Meuse curves to the right, and takes its winding way round a green meadow, sprinkled with some of the houses of Anseremme. The old bridge of St. Jean spans the meeting of the Lesse and the Meuse, but we leave it on our right, and drive along a high green bank beside the Lesse. The road is narrow, and last year a sad accident happened at this very spot. Once a month there is a pig market in Dinant, to which old women bring their struggling squeaking piglings, in bags over their shoulders. The miller of Walzin and his wife had been into town to buy pigs at the market, and were driving home with their bargains. Just as they passed the bridge of Anseremme, one of the pigs

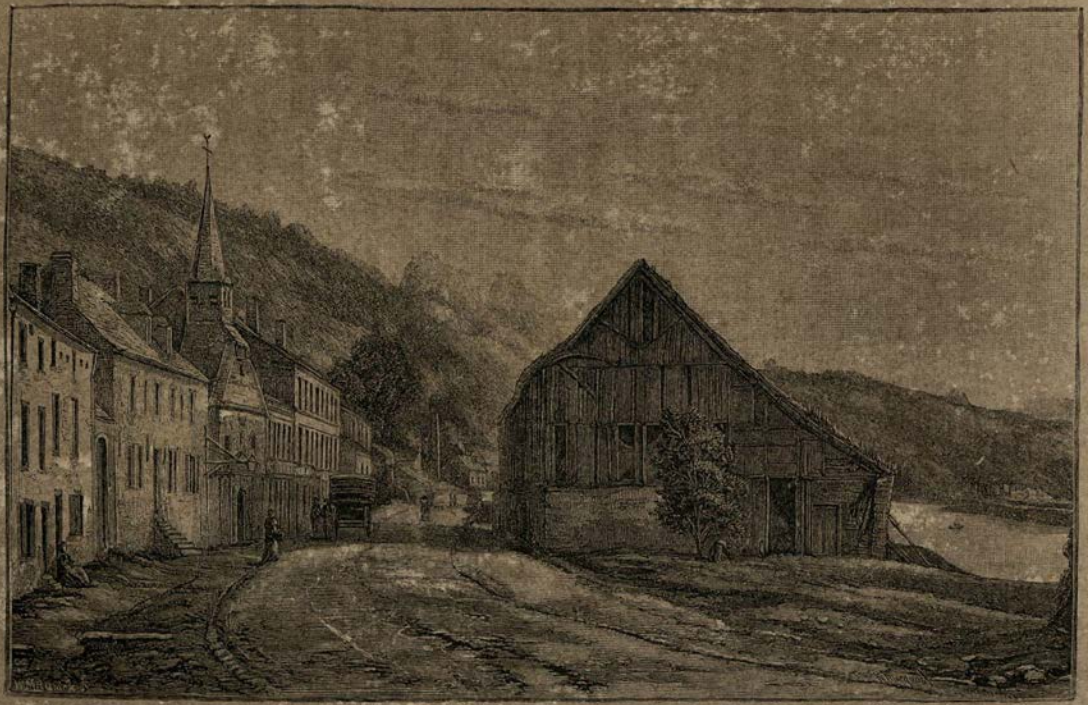
in the cart set up a loud squealing, the horse took fright, shied, and then plunged down the steep bank into the river, and the miller and his wife were both drowned.

Anseremme is a pretty little village, and the inn calls itself Le Repos des Artistes. It is a favourite resort of Belgian painters, and we were told that living is very cheap there.

We are now in the valley of the Lesse, which quickly becomes more and more beautiful. It is narrow, and the high cliffs which shut it in are richly wooded. Sometimes the view closes at each end, and through a screen of poplars we see the murmuring river, green and dim with the shadows of the woods.

The road becomes so narrow, between the high hedge tasselled with wild rose sprays on the left, and the tall poplars on the right, that we stop and take our faithful follower Jim into the carriage, lest he should get under the horses' feet. Jim is a very handsome black and tan dachshund, who seems quite at home everywhere. He belongs to our friend, and like his master he is everybody's favourite.

Presently we reach a ford, for the mill of Walzin, to which we are bound, lies across the Lesse, but the rain has so swollen the river, that the water forces its way



ON THE WAY TO THE ROCHE-À-BAYARD.

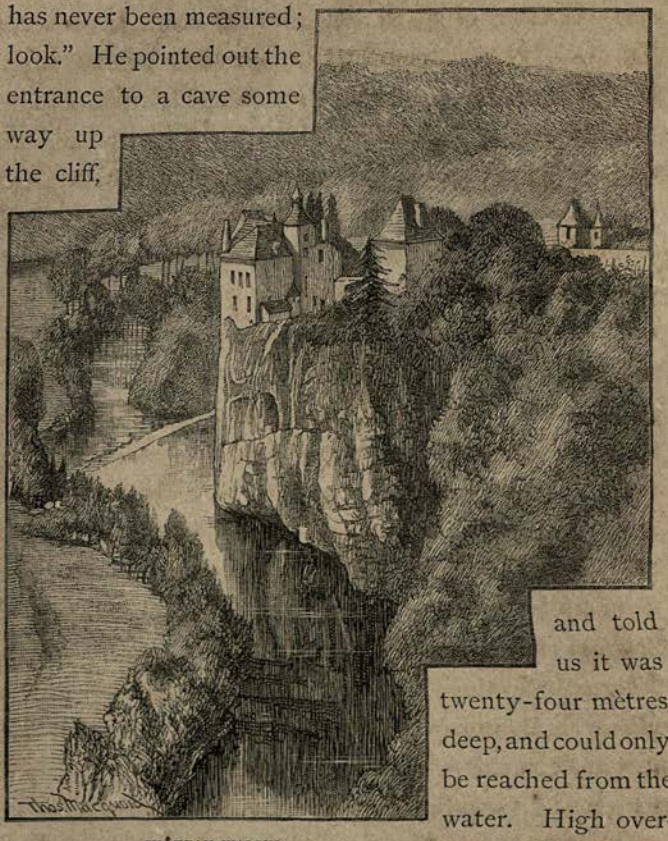
through the closed doors into the carriage, and we have to tuck up our feet on to the seats to escape a wetting. Our driver looks behind him at our outcry, and shrugs his shoulders.

"Ça ne fait rien," he says, "il y a une éponge."

So when we are across we get out while the floor is dried, glad of the chance of helping ourselves to the wild blossoms around us. Then we cross a meadow, and very soon reach the mill, a quaint stone building under the cliffs of Walzin, with a broad weir in front of it, over which the water rushes foaming into the birch-bordered pond below. We went along a narrow path to the end of the weir. A punt was moored here, but the river beyond looked black and swollen, and our driver had told us we should not be able to go on the water.

We all, however, got into the punt, and sometimes by help of a long pole, or, where the water was too deep, by help of a broad wooden paddle, we glided along under the shadow of the lofty perpendicular cliff of Walzin. Now the cliff turns, and we move round its base on the smooth dark stream that circles it. The stillness is very weird and solemn as we glide through the black glassy water. "It is not known how deep the water is," says our boatman, pointing with his wooden paddle;

"there is no rod long enough to find its depth; and it has never been measured; look." He pointed out the entrance to a cave some way up the cliff,



CHÂTEAU WALZIN.

and told us it was twenty-four mètres deep, and could only be reached from the water. High overhead, looking down from the verge of the cliff, of which it seems a part, into the glassy blackness below, is the castle.

The whole valley of the Lesse is famous for these caves, in some of which antediluvian bones have been found. Then we rowed to the meadow beyond, and landed to see the view. The water here is fringed with willows, and through these we see opposite us the mill, at the end of the smooth glassy pool, and on the left the water dashing down in a broad white sheet into the mill pond below, turning the big wheel round merrily. The pool, or river, is bordered by lofty gray cliffs. On the right, above the weir, tall trees crown the bank, till the rock behind rises higher and higher, changing into dull red above, and at the sudden bend taken by the river the cliff is crowned by the castle, which seems to grow out of the brown-red stone. The bare rugged rock is wreathed here and there with ivy. The present castle of Walzin only dates from the sixteenth century, but certainly it is the most picturesque we have seen in Belgium. Its position on the rugged abrupt rock, its rich sombre colour, the dark still water below it, the rushing mill-stream and gray cliffs beyond, with the quiet mill, make a picture impossible to forget, seen as we saw it, with brilliant effects of light and shade.

We went back to the mill and got some excellent milk; but the miller's daughters were in great trouble. Two of the sisters had been poisoned by a herb used in

mistake for parsley; one had partly recovered, but the other was still very ill. There seems a doom on this family, for these are the children of the drowned miller.

Near the stove lay something like a wicker hencoop, with a round hole at top; and on asking its use we were told it was for the baby, a pretty little creature, less than a year old. "She can walk in it," the bonne said, "without fear of falling."

CHAPTER V.

FONDS DE LEFFE—POILVACHE.

WE heard much of the beauty of the Fonds de Leffe, and one fine morning I started on a walk beside the Meuse. I had been told to ask my way when I reached the Communal College, but I scarcely met a wayfarer, and not one from whom I could hope to get intelligent guidance. At last, just before reaching the tall red chimney of the manufactory—for alas! the general view of fair Dinant is disfigured by more than one long chimney—I saw some children playing before a small house, and calling to them, I asked my way. They shook their heads, and ran indoors. Presently out came a plump, kind-faced woman, with a most comical twinkle in her eye.

"The nearest way to the Fonds de Leffe, and then to Dinant by the Citadel?" She nursed one elbow in the palm of one plump hand, while she pressed the fingers of the other against her cheek bone. All at

once she came out of her thinking fit, smiled, gave a little start, and snatched at my arm with both hands.

"Yes, yes," she said, with a very happy twinkle in her dark eyes, "I see now, and I will tell you, Madame, how to go—to begin with," she spoke so fast, and with such broad Walloon accent, that it was not easy to follow her rapid words, "do you see the waggon yonder coming from the factory?" I looked, and saw a huge cart with three gray horses, one before the other, their bells tinkling merrily as they came. My excited friend pointed to the carter, a fine sunburnt young fellow, who walked beside the horses twisting the end of his whip.

"Aha!" She gave a sigh of satisfaction. "That is my son Jules." Then she cried out loudly, "Jules, Jules, you will guide this lady to the Fonds de Leffe." Jules pointed with his cart whip. "Aha! that is a pity. I see he must leave you where the roads part; but then, Madame, I will tell you how to go, and when one has intelligence, ma foi, two words will go as far as twenty would to some people. Listen then, Madame." She seized my arm again, keeping her eyes fixed on the carter, who had now taken the turning beside us which led away from the Meuse through the little village of Leffe. She was plainly afraid he would pass

out of sight before she had finished her instructions. "You must follow Jules, Madame, and you will come to where three roads meet, and then he will turn away to the left; and you, you—well, you must keep one of the roads on the right, Jules will tell you which; but presently you will come to a château, with a field in front. You will go down between the château and the field, and you will see a little river with a wooden bridge across it." She threw her head back and looked keenly at me. "Ma foi! I think you can cross the bridge, Madame; it is old, but you are not heavy, and my little Léonie takes every day his dinner to her brother who works on the other side of the bridge, and Madame can cross the bridge if Léonie can. Hasten then, Madame, in order that you may overtake my son."

I hurried through the village of Leffe, passing the old church, and on the left the house in which was born the famous Wiertz. Jules was not so amiable as his mother. When I reached him he was turning off to the left without giving me any instructions, and even when I asked, he gave a sulky nod, and, pointing his whip towards the road I was to take, turned his back on me. I had much wished to see this valley of the Leffe, as the tiny stream which helps to work the numerous factories here is called, partly for its beauty,

and because of the legend of the Charrau de Charlemagne. To-day the sun was so intensely hot that I had not courage to keep along the highroad, and seek out the marvellous tracks, but I saw them another day when we drove all through the valley, and saw to perfection its exquisite beauties. To-day I passed by a large manufactory, once a famous abbey, and then by the château my guide had indicated; and, guided by the singing of the brook, I found my way to the little bridge. No wonder she hesitated about it. I hesitated too. There were three round poles, about a foot apart, reaching across from one broken slippery bank to the other; and now that I was close to it, I found the brook much wider than I had fancied. On each side a few worn-out planks still clung across the poles, but there was a wide chasm in the middle, and it was necessary either to jump this, or trust myself to walk on the round pole. However, I disliked the idea of giving up my expedition, and somehow I got across.

I soon found that I had chosen an unfrequented way across country. The flowers flung themselves across my path as I climbed. The butterflies seemed to have no fear of me, but sported close by; prisms of rich and varied colour. As I rose higher and higher,

for the narrow path is cut on the side of the cliff, I overlooked the charming valley below, with its bold crags overhanging pretty whitewashed cottages nestling below among the trees. Farther on is a most picturesque spot: on one side the steep rugged cliff turns so abruptly that the road below forms a half-circle; on the other is a low wall, beside the tiny Leffe, and beyond this a grassy orchard. The strata of the rocks beyond this come in vertical lines, giving almost a channelled look to the stone; in front are slender satin-stemmed birch-trees, which reflect themselves in the river below.

I heard that besides the carriage-way, which is certainly visible up the steep side of the cliff, at the part called the Pas de Charlemagne, there are also, near the workshops of Monsieur Grandjean, traces of steps cut in one of the marble rocks of this valley, and not far off the gigantic print of a horse's hoof similar to that shown on the Roche-à-Bayard. This is the legend of the Charrau of Charlemagne.

Once upon a time Charlemagne, followed by his soldiers, was in full pursuit of the four sons of Aymon, flying from him across the heights that intervene between Dinant and the Fonds de Leffe to their castle of Poilvache. All the four brothers were mounted on

their faithful horse Bayard, who, when he reached this valley, cleared it at one bound, and left the print of his hoof on the spot on which he alighted. The emperor was close on the heels of his enemies, but when he reached the top of the ridge whence Bayard had taken his leap he very plainly saw he could not follow, so he rode slowly down into the valley below. Looking up at the face of the cliff on the other side, he saw that it was an impracticable ascent, and at once he set his soldiers to work till they had hewn him a flight of steps in the solid rock, and above these a carriage-way. The soldiers set to work, and soon the army reached the top of the steep cliff; but the weather was hot and the work had been hard, and when the men reached the heights they cried out for water and murmured against their emperor. Then Charlemagne prayed that water might be sent for his poor soldiers, and struck the rock with his lance. A spring gushed out abundantly; and ever since the fountain of Charlemagne has trickled from the top of the cliff to the bottom of the valley.

When I reached the top of the ridge the view was still finer. I found a farm on the top, and on the other side a steep descent with the road to Ciney lying below. I crossed this when I reached the bottom,

and luckily met a woman going towards Dinant, for I felt puzzled how to steer my course. There were many turnings leading in various ways, but I could see no trace of the citadel of Dinant. I had a charming walk through lanes and across fields, and climbed again, till at last I found myself on the verge of the cliff that overhangs the church, and close to the hanging garden of the Tête d'Or. It is a very charming and varied walk, and I recommend every one to try it spite of the rickety bridge at the bottom of the valley of the Leffe.

In the afternoon we took the steamer and went to Poilvache, or rather to the landing-place of Houx, at the foot of the rock on which the castle stands. Houx looked as much like a toy village as ever. It was difficult to believe that it could boast 300 inhabitants, for after landing we met only a couple of children and some goats before we began the steep ascent to Poilvache. We heard that some large celts in the museum at Namur were found at Houx.

The narrow turning near the little church, with its square tower and stumpy spire, and the modern château of the Count de Lévignan, led us up a rugged but picturesque glen, with small stone hovels on the left of the little stream trickling down to the Meuse below,

and a wood on the right, which gave us some shadow as we climbed. Soon the hovels ceased, and a lofty green hill rose beside us. Presently we had to leave the shelter of the wood, with its gay fringe of wild blossoms. It was easy enough to get across the narrow brook, and we mounted the green ascent on our left.

The castle of Poilvache is much higher up than it seems from below, and on this side the ascent is steep and toilsome, especially in intense sunshine; but we were amply repaid by the views we got—sometimes of dark gorges behind us, where the pine-trees looked black in the softness of their sombre colour; sometimes charming peeps of the Meuse. When we reached the shoulder of the lofty hill the river lay beneath us, winding like a silver serpent through the landscape towards Dinant. We entered across what must have been an immense moat or ditch, in front of a crumbling tower. From below we had seen a few towers and some curtain walls between, built on the very verge of the lofty rock that overhangs the river, but we were utterly amazed at the extent of ground covered by the remains of this castle, some of them still standing firm and upright in the shape of walls and towers. A whole day might be pleasantly spent in these ruins, there is

so much to examine and discover. A tall old peasant in a blouse came up and showed us the cistern and the prison, and some certainly wonderful vaults, the extent of which is unknown, as hitherto they have been choked with the fallen *débris;* but the present proprietor has begun to excavate, and it is said there is good reason to suppose that subterranean passages have existed, leading down to the Meuse. These would have made communication easy with the tower of Crèvecœur opposite. Farther on we came to a tesselated pavement which had been discovered a few weeks before our visit.

There is a wonderful well here, which is said to have reached the foot of the rock itself. Now it is half-choked with rubbish, but is firm and solid enough to last for ever.

The ruins cover such an immense space of ground that it seemed quite a journey to reach the old windows that overhang the Meuse. The view from here is beautiful, but it is a dizzy look-down from the crumbling wall; for, though this is partly clad with ivy and brambles, yet these form no protecting screen,—they seem to hang in air. The rock goes down sheer to the river below. The sky threatened rain, and the storm effects, constantly changing as the masses of vapour blew here and there, were very grand. Opposite us,

on the right, is Moulins, and but for the wooded hills we must see Montaigle, the ancient rival of Poilvache, perched like an eagle on its rock. On the left are Bouvignes and Crèvecœur, and below is the broad beautiful Meuse, winding its graceful way between lofty, tree-covered crags or bare rocks, with tufts of scanty herbage here and there.

On the right it curves abruptly, and one soon loses sight of it, but on the left one can follow its windings for some distance. On the opposite side of the little glen by which we had mounted is the ruined Tour de Monnaye. It seems to be perfectly inaccessible, perched on the side of the rock. The origin of the name Poilvache is much disputed. According to some authorities, it was taken from Pont des Vaches, while others say Pille-Vaches is more likely. All seem to agree that at one time it was a nest for brigands and marauders, and also that it was originally built by those wonderful heroes of the Ardennes and its neighbourhood, Les quatre fils Aymon. It was in the vast subterranean vaults of Poilvache that Renaud de Montauban, mounted on the magic horse Bayard, more than once escaped the vengeance of Charlemagne. Our brown-faced, black-eyed guide was eloquent on this subject. He seemed to think that, as foreigners, we

could never have heard either of the sons of Aymon or of Charlemagne.

"Look you," he said, "Charlemagne was a great king, an emperor even, and it was wrong of Renaud to kill his nephew Berthelot. Without doubt, the emperor, this great Charlemagne, had to revenge the death of his nephew, and when the four brothers came flying to their castle of Poilvache on the back of this wonderful horse he at once came after them. But he did not take Renaud.—No," he shook his head vehemently, and flung both arms out towards the vaults; "No, he did not take him. For why"—a group of visitors to the ruins had joined us, and he looked round on us all triumphantly—"for why, because Renaud had taken refuge in those wonderful vaults—vaults which reach down to the Meuse, and they are there, mon Dieu! the vaults are always there."

Brambles flaunt their long red arms over the round towers, and a perfect wilderness of wild blossoms carpets the spaces between the broken walls and arches. Poilvache is not so picturesque a ruin as Montaigle, because it is on more level ground, but it is more interesting.

There seems to have been constant warfare between the houses of Luxembourg and Namur for the possession of this important fortress, till, in the middle

of the fourteenth century, the men of Dinant took it by stratagem, and laid it in ruins. The castle had been blockaded for some days, when one morning a party sallied forth before daybreak by one of the subterranean outlets in order to "lift" some cattle as supplies for the garrison. The Dinantais surprised these plunderers and put them all to the sword, so that not one escaped to carry the news to the castle. The Dinantais had learned the pass-word from one of the butchered cow-stealers, and they soon collected in Dinant and its environs a quantity of cow and sheep skins, and disguising themselves in these, as soon as it grew dusk they climbed the heights of Poilvache. Driving before them a herd of beeves and sheep, they slowly approached the walls. At the pass-word the portcullis was raised and the drawbridge lowered, and the Dinantais entered the fortress, concealed among the animals they imitated, and closely followed by a band of 500 soldiers. The castle was taken and partly destroyed, but some years after was ceded to the Count of Namur, and was rebuilt before the close of the century. About seventy years later it was again besieged by the Dinantais and the men of Huy, under the command of the warlike Bishop of Liège, Jean de Heinsberg, and once more its defences were shattered.

In 1654 the Free Lances of Henry II. of France, after the destruction of Bouvignes, completed the fall of Poilvache.

I have never seen a ruin which gives so full an idea of the power of these fierce tyrants of the Middle Ages. Placed so high and far away from any human habitation, so large that it must have been a little town in itself, and showing such an alarming amount of solid constructions in the way of underground galleries, vaults, and prisons, one feels how the spirit of Georges Sand would revolt among the ruins of Poilvache, one only of the numberless remnants of tyranny that throng the heights and valleys of the Meuse, and the Ardennes.

We came down the cliff by a less steep road, on the side nearest Yvoir, bordered by fir-trees. The view from this side is extensive, but not so varied as it is on the other.

We had intended to try and find our way across country to Dinant from the other side of Poilvache, but we had been so long exploring the ruins that it had grown late, and I was so tired that we agreed to wait beside the river till the steamer returned from Namur.

As we sat on the low wall between the river and the road, we noticed the remarkable conformation of the rock. The strata lie in huge curved lines. For

some time we sat in most delicious peace, watching the changing light on the water. Presently some cows came up the road. An old man and woman walked some way behind them, with happy restful faces. They looked as if they had truly gone hand in hand through life helping each other. All at once the stillness was broken. There was the sound of a fife and drum. A group of untidy-looking men, with a train of children after them, came out of the little café near the landing-place. They did not walk very steadily, and they went into a still more wretched little café close by. Presently they came out again, and went back to the first café, making most discordant squeaking and drumming. We were told that it was the village fête of Houx, and that "the band," as it was called, would enjoy itself by going about from café to café as long as it was able, a monotonous round of fife and drum and gouttes. We were glad to see the steamer coming up from Yvoir. As we go home we watch the sun set behind the hill; the trees above fling down dark reflections in the water; the moon is shining; and Crèvecœur stands out boldly on our right.

CHAPTER VI.

BOUVIGNES—MONTAIGLE AND ITS LEGEND.

IT is difficult to believe that the silent, sleepy, grass-grown village of Bouvignes was once a considerable Walloon town, a powerful rival of its audacious neighbour, Dinant-sur-Meuse.

The two places lie so nearly opposite one another, that one can imagine how they used to frown mutual defiance across the broad beautiful Meuse, from their rival towers of Mont Orgueil and Crèvecœur, perched on the limestone crags above each town.

The *copères* of Dinant seem to have often got the worst of it in these encounters with their rivals; they were a brave, generous, but turbulent race. At the time when Dinant was so hotly besieged by Philip the Good and his fierce son Charles the Rash, the townsmen of Bouvignes sent a herald imploring their neighbours to be reasonable and to submit themselves to their sovereign; but the Dinantais contemptuously hanged

WOMEN OF BOUVIGNES.

the messenger, and continued to insult the Duke of Burgundy, until he razed their city to the ground, and actually flung 800 of the contumacious townsmen into the Meuse.

The people of Bouvignes were cruel and revengeful too; for as the bodies floated past them down the Meuse, some still struggling for life, the Bouvignais stood on the bank and thrust the poor creatures who tried to get on shore back into the water again.

The two towns had an intense rivalry in the manufacture of the brass and copper wares famous throughout Europe, till this fatal destruction of Dinant, by the name of Dinanteries.

But there must have been more vitality in Dinant than in Bouvignes, for the latter has dwindled into a mere village without special industries or manufactories since its destruction by the French in the time of Henry II., while Dinant, though it too suffered at the same period, has risen from its ruins into a cheerful brisk little town, pleasant to look at and to live in.

Bouvignes lies in quaint desolation beneath the ruined tower of Crèvecœur; but the remains of fortifications—a gateway, and especially a grand old gabled Spanish house on the grass-grown Place, The Chatellenie—tell that it has a history of its own, and make one willing to believe the assertion that it could once have mustered 15,000 fighting-men when need required.

One day our ever-kind and thoughtful friend said

A DOUBLE DUTY.

to us, "I introduced you to Château Walzin; I will now show you the ruins of Montaigle." So, on a bright afternoon we started, with Félix for driver, and

"Jim" the dachshund, now gravely seated beside his master in the roomy carriage.

Bouvignes looked charming as we drove through it on our way to Montaigle, with its unexpected alleys and turnings full of bright effects, peeps of the sparkling river and limestone crags on the opposite bank, and groups of picturesque people who seemed to be standing or sitting just where figures were wanted to perfect the scene. Quaint and amusing pictures appeared at every turn. One woman had set her wash-tub on a heap of manure just within a doorway overshadowed by a vine, and she left her hard rubbing now and then to smack her little boy for some misconduct or other.

We stopped to look at the view on the Meuse, which one of our artist friends was painting. On the opposite side of the river lived the inquisitive pig represented in the illustration on the next page; he was a pig of character and observation—a respectable and domestic pig—in no way resembling his cousins the wild boars of the Ardennes. His custom of an afternoon was to sit in his stone sty, his paws falling negligently over the edge, his eyes twinkling with satisfaction—solacing himself at times with a drink out of his pan—watching the skittle-players. He would grunt his approval, so it would seem, when

any specially good hit was made. When skittles were not going on he used to watch the passers-by in-

WATCHING THE SKITTLE-PLAYERS.

quisitively. The engraving is from the painting in the Royal Academy, in which Mr. R. B. Browning has immortalised this pig of pigs.

After leaving Bouvignes the valley widened and the road no longer kept so closely beside the Meuse, although it followed its course as far as Moulins; then it took an abrupt westerly turn into the valley of the Molignée, a valley bordered by limestone cliffs, with a bright little river which goes sparkling and singing along beside us, sometimes half hidden by gray willow-trees, that bend thirstily over it, as if trying to keep it for themselves. As the road turns abruptly, the valley narrows and the limestone rocks project in huge gray shoulders through the birch-trees that clothe the sides.

Long shadows are stealing down the sides of the cliffs, and the little river shows golden through the willows as the light reaches it from the glow on the cliffs above. The road winds continually in and out as it follows the course of this lively little stream; it seems as if some huge man of middle-age were trying to walk in step with a blithe skipping maiden not yet in her teens. But all at once our attention is drawn from the river and the exquisite variety of scenery which its wayward course creates in the valley.

Our driver turns round on his seat and points with his whip, and as he considers himself the best coachman in Belgium, we feel bound to listen to Félix.

"See there, ladies"—he is pointing to an enormous

rock on the right that towers high in air—"V'là la Roche aux Corbeaux." He cracks his whip loudly, and a black crowd of crows rises from the rock; there must be hundreds of the noisy cawing creatures. They career round and round for some minutes, then they return to their favourite haunt. Félix looks as if he expects to be clapped for his conjuring feat, and drives on with a smile of triumph. The green meadow on the right, through which the river danced along, was purple here with autumn crocus. We got out and gathered some; and one of our companions climbed up into the wood on the right and brought down treasures of the rich-hued glossy berries of Gueldres rose, with leaves of every exquisite tint dying daily in fresh beauty as the month draws to a close. But the crags grew barer on the right, the valley looked wilder, almost as if it were unvisited, and soon we saw, down in a hollow on the left, beside the river, a half-ruined mill. The cliff rose abruptly behind it, thickly wooded, and a sudden turn in the road brought the rocks in front also; the mill seemed niched in its dark deserted corner, and a white mist that rose from the water clung round the thatch of the lonely house. We asked if any one lived there. Félix shook his head, and looked unusually serious.

"Ma foi, no," he said; "I should think not; it has been empty these six years."

"What happened to the last owner?" I asked. I thought there must surely be a history belonging to the weird, ghost-like habitation.

Félix shrugged his shoulders. "He, madame?—well, he speculated and ruined himself. Then he died, and his wife died too."

He whipped up his horses, and drove along as if he thought I ought to be satisfied; but my interest was not nearly quieted.

"But, Félix," I said, "it looks a likely place for business. Why is the mill empty—why did not some other miller take it when the last tenant died?"

"Ah, bah! so they did, one or two; but no one stays there, and now it is going to ruin—there seems a curse on it."

We all looked at one another; there was certainly a ghost at the bottom of this mystery.

"Félix," I said, feeling rather afraid he might laugh at me, "is the mill haunted? There is perhaps some spirit that shows itself and frightens people away."

Félix did laugh—a hearty guffaw; he also turned round, and gave me a keen look to see if I were in earnest.

"Ma foi, madame," he cried, "there may be a ghost for all I know; but if there is one, it is the ghost called want of money that keeps buyers from such a dilapidated place."

He laughed again, as if he thought he had quite laid my fears, and we drove on towards Montaigle.

The road becomes yet more wild and romantic; the continual sweeps made by the sudden turns of the valley, and the lofty, sometimes perpendicular crags, give a constant variety of scene. All at once—the valley widens as it turns—we come in sight of Montaigle; perched on the top of the lofty gray rocks, it seems to form a part of them, and to menace the green valley that surrounds it; for the rock of Montaigle rises from a green belt of meadow through which the river circles. On one side the ruins form a long gray façade partly clad in ivy and clematis wreaths, crimsoning leaves with tufts of white blossom; the remnants of many towers show here and there, and the watch-tower stands out grandly on the highest point of gray crag. At the foot of this lofty mass of rocks are black marble works, with men busy at a sort of saw-mill; cattle are grazing in the meadow. We stood looking at the striking picture while we waited for a guide to the ruins. They are kept locked up, or

THE RUINS OF MONTAIGLE.

doubtless, bit by bit, the stones would be carried away to build cottages in the little village below.

But, if we thought the old ruin grand, frowning down from its lofty perch, we thought it lovely when we had climbed the steep ascent and found ourselves in what was the great entrance court. On both sides are broken fern-grown steps leading to underground vaults, many of which are still perfect; other steps, wreathed with a wealth of clematis in full blossom, and rich with tufts of rare fern peeping out of mouldering chinks in tantalising fashion, lead upwards; but when we tried to carry away some of the lovely ferns as memories of our visit, we found them far too deeply rooted.

"The last time I was here," said the friend who had brought us to Montaigle, "such a charming girl guided us over the ruins—a pretty bright creature; I hoped we should have seen her to-day." He turned to our guide, a pleasant-looking young fellow, and asked him what had become of Rosalie.

The young fellow looked sad; then he said abruptly, "Rosalie was my sister, and she is dead."

The sudden tidings threw a gloom over our sunshine; on inquiry we heard that Rosalie had married a year ago, and that she had died quite lately in giving birth to a child.

'Poor little Rosalie! she was so gay, so simple," our friend said; "she seemed to shed a charm over the old place."

We went on up the flight of broken fern-grown steps to the upper part of the castle; here we found a spacious grassed chamber garlanded with ivy and clematis, bright golden and rosy blossoms twinkling here and there underfoot. From the open gap in the walls where windows had been, we got a fine view over the valley, out of which rises the rock of Montaigle. Our friend became so rapt in gazing at the landscape —perhaps thinking of Rosalie—and taking no heed of where he was, that a gust of wind lifted his hat from his head and whirled it into the valley below.

There was a diligent search, for the hat was a favourite with its owner, and we heard that the guide who took us over the ruins searched for days afterwards about the spot, but without success; doubtless some enterprising jackdaw—for these chattering birds haunt the castle—will this year bring up a young family in a new kind of nest.

Jim sniffed and hunted about, and got into all sorts of strange places, while we climbed still higher among the ivy- and bramble-cumbered ruins till we found ourselves in the watch-tower; it is a giddy look down

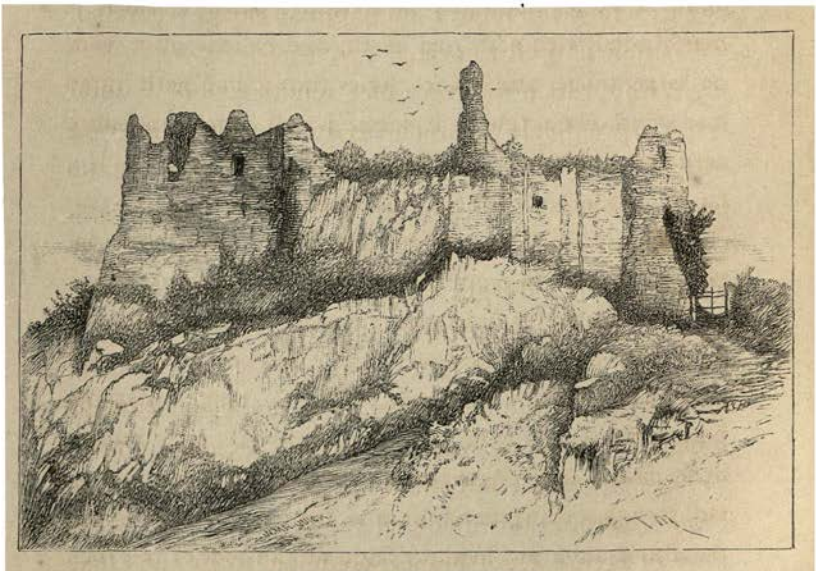
from this, but there is an extended view over the country round. Since this visit to Montaigle, Jim, in one of his adventurous exploits, fell from a high rock into the road as he was following his master, and was taken up for dead ; but I am happy to say he recovered, and is now as well as ever.

With all its advantages of strength and of natural position, Montaigle seems chiefly to have offered passive resistance in the wars of the period. There is no record that it plundered or attacked towns or fortresses; it seems to have been peaceably inhabited till the middle of the fifteenth century, when the inhabitants of Dinant and of Liège, then in revolt against Philip of Burgundy, stormed and sacked the castle and set it on fire. After this Montaigle passed into the hands of the reigning Duke, and was garrisoned by Burgundian soldiers. A worse fate, however, was in store for the fortress. About the middle of the sixteenth century the army of Henry II. of France, commanded by the Duke of Nevers, after taking the town of Bouvignes, pushed on to attack Montaigle.

But the garrison had received orders to abandon the fortress, and the French entered it without contest. These Vandals first pillaged it of all worth taking, and then, rolling some barrels of gunpowder into the courts,

they set fire to them and blew the castle into its present state of ruin.

Coming down the ruined grass-grown steps, we found our way into a lower court, on one side of which



LA TOUR DES PENDUS, MONTAIGLE.

is the well scooped in the solid rock, to a depth, it is said, of upwards of eighty feet. This well is a picture of beauty. Within it long ribands of hart's-tongue—now a golden green in the afternoon sunshine—stretch down, scenting the water far below, and other and

rarer ferns show their delicate fronds in the chinks of its stonework. Our guide flung down a stone; it seemed a long pause before we heard its dull plunge, and to this came a strangely audible echo. One after another we all bent over the rickety parapet, which is heightened with sods and earth, and called out a word or a sentence, and back came the sound with rapid and vivid distinctness; it seemed as if some imprisoned creature must lurk in the fern-throated abyss. Not far from the well, on the wall which surrounds this part of the ruins, is a solitary tower, said to have been the prison; it has an ominous name—La Tour des Pendus.

One of the subterranean vaults is very large, and over it, in one of the towers, was the entrance to the oubliette. In this corner of the castle, on the platform beside this vault, a lady about fifty years ago built a little châlet, and passed several summers here with her children, spending her time and her money among the poor and suffering in the village at the foot of the rock.

Our guide showed us the drawbridge, connecting the donjon with the tower in which was the cistern; also he showed us where had been the chapel. The buildings were evidently on a large scale and very complete. Some years ago, about seventy large stone balls were found in the lowest story of one of the

towers. But there is nothing warlike in the present aspect of Montaigle. It is a most graceful and flower-laden ruin; even the briers and brambles seem checked from a too rampant growth to give place to delicate sprays of small-leaved ivy, crimson-leaved clematis with starry flowers, while tiny blossoms and minute fern fronds enamel the crumbling yellow-gray of the ruined stones and make a carpet under foot.

There is a romantic story belonging to Montaigle, called the legend of Gilles de Berlaymont, who held the castle in the thirteenth century.

Some miles north of the ruins of Montaigle is the Château of Bioulx. There was once a much older castle here, and there was deadly feud between its lord and the châtelain of Montaigle. Arnolf de Bioulx was much older than Gilles de Berlaymont; he was a widower, with an only daughter of some eighteen years old—the fair Midone de Bioulx. Midone was an exquisite creature, loving, and gentle, and true; as simple as a daisy and as fair as a June lily. Her dark blue eyes beamed with lovely thoughts, and her golden hair circled a head fit for a cameo. Her mother had died when Midone was a baby, and most of her childhood had been passed with her nurse Ursula, or when she received instruction from the chaplain, a grave old

priest. Arnolf, lord of Bioulx, was a rough turbulent man; a man of action, with few words to spare; his tongue's chief use was in giving orders, and in hurling blame on every one; but, if he heard the word Montaigle, or the name of Gilles de Berlaymont, then blame became execration, and he would swear fierce oaths that made his gentle daughter tremble when she heard them. In those days there was little for girls to read besides the chronicles of saintly lives and deeds. Midone's chief recreation was found in riding in the forest that then stretched from Bioulx to the banks of the Meuse. During these rides, and while she sat at her embroidery, she had often pondered the feud between the two families; as she grew older, it seemed to her sad and terrible. All her reading taught her that men should love one another, and yet the first command she had ever received from her father was to hate the cursed race of Montaigle.

She thought of Gilles de Berlaymont as middle-aged and stern, like her father, and she often prayed that his heart might soften, so that peace might reign between the two families. She pitied Berlaymont too; for Ursula, her nurse, who was garrulous, and a gossip besides, had told her how the lord of Montaigle lived alone in his castle, and that he had

been an orphan nearly all his life. Midone thought that a man who had neither mother nor sisters could not help being fierce and savage. She called to mind how seldom her own intercession for prisoners and delinquents prevailed with her father, and she shuddered in thinking how terrible a ruffian Gilles de Berlaymont must be. In truth, the sweet maiden thought of him as a kind of untamed savage, to be avoided like a wild beast.

It chanced one day that the lord of Montaigle, Gilles de Berlaymont, was journeying towards Namur when he met a company on horseback—two serving-men, a lady, and her attendant. One of the attendants spoke to her mistress as Berlaymont drew up beside the road to let the lady pass; as she passed, he looked at her. The lady looked also; their eyes met, and their hearts spoke through their eyes.

Midone de Bioulx had heard of the prowess and chivalry of the lord of Montaigle, but she had not been told that he was young, and that he was as handsome as he was brave; but Gilles de Berlaymont was struck as by magic—he felt that he had never dreamed of so lovely a lady as this beautiful girl who sate her horse thus gracefully.

He was about to address her, and then he saw the

arms of Arnolf de Bioulx on the retainers' coats, and he passed on with a haughty salutation.

When Midone reached the castle of Bioulx, she went at once to her nurse's chamber, without as much as waiting to be disencumbered of her riding gear.

"Nurse," she said, with some show of anger sparkling in her dark blue eyes, "why did you not tell me that the lord of Berlaymont is good and beautiful and young? All this time you have let me think of him as a monster."

Ursula crossed herself, and pressed her thin lips together. She was garrulous, but she was far too wise to put visions of handsome young men before her darling's mind.

"Handsome, is he?" she said, tossing her head till its tall cone-like cap seemed likely to fall off; "bless your sweet eyes, Midone, all men look handsome when armed cap-à-pie. I would be sorry to have chosen my Ralph when he was in steel bonnet and buff jerkin."

Midone turned away; her excited angry mood puzzled her; she had never felt so strangely before.

"At least he looks good," she said; "garb cannot alter expression—he looks good and tender too—tenderer than I had thought a man could look;" but

with the words, a hot flush mounted to her forehead, and though her face was turned away the watchful duenna saw with alarm the little ear crimson in an instant.

Ursula was a wise woman, considering her limited chances of gaining wisdom; but her sudden alarm clouded her judgment.

"Good and beautiful, is he?—the Evil One can assume any shape he likes, my child. He looked tender, did he, Midone?—then he is a serpent as well as a thirsting tiger. Yes—yes, it would suit him well to seize upon you, or Father Peter, or me, or any one held dear by my lord baron, and to keep us captive till a heavy ransom was paid for our release. He is an imp of Satan, is Gilles de Berlaymont; do you suppose my lord the baron would hate him if he were good? Pray heaven, my child, that the Evil One does not inspire you to differ from your noble father."

Midone did not answer; she was puzzled and perplexed, and she wished she had held her peace, for next day Ursula averred that the weather was not fit for riding, and on the day after it was found that Midone's palfrey was indisposed, so the maiden was forced to content herself with the exercise she could get on the battlements of the castle.

Meantime the lord of Berlaymont had ridden on

towards Namur. But all the way he rode something was tugging at his heartstrings. After a few days' absence he came back to Montaigle; and his people noticed that he had grown pale and sad, his appetite failed him, and at night he tossed his huge limbs on his hard bed and wished for day. For it seemed at first to him that it was a cowardly sin to love Midone; he ought rather to despise a daughter of the hated De Bioulx. He longed to pick a quarrel with some other of his fierce neighbours, so as to drive away the tormenting memory of Midone.

But love conquered. Why should he hate this sweet lady because his father and uncles had hated her relatives? Once more he took the road towards Namur, and once again he met the fair Midone. This time he spoke to her, and she gave him a courteous answer, and blushed under his ardent gaze. "I am right," she thought; "he is beautiful—poor old nurse would think so if she saw him." But Ursula lay sick, and Midone for once was not anxious for her nurse's speedy recovery.

De Berlaymont went home rejoicing. It seemed to him that fate was propitious, or he should not have had the rare good fortune thus again, as it were by chance, to meet his beloved. Poor enamoured Gilles, there was really little chance in the matter, for the

gentle Midone had wished ardently to see him again, and every day since Ursula's illness began she had ridden forth to the spot where she had met the enemy of her race. Midone told herself she was not moved by idle curiosity; it seemed to her simply right and wise to assure herself that she was wrong and her father right about the lord of Berlaymont. If she went to meet him fortified by prayer, it would not be possible for the Evil One to cast a glamour over her senses; she should see him as he really was. And yet something—Midone told herself it was maidenly shyness—kept her from confiding her holy purpose even to Father Peter.

She, too, after this meeting, went home in a dream of radiant joy. He was good, she was sure of it; and when her father saw his beautiful loving eyes, he would forget the old hatred, and there would be peace between the two houses. And then Midone's colour deepened, and she urged her horse on quickly towards the castle of Bioulx.

There was no hesitation in the mind of De Berlaymont. He must have Midone for his wife—he could not live without her. "Surely," his love-clouded reflection said, "De Bioulx is not a fool; he can never hope to take Montaigle by force of arms; and yet, if he gives me his daughter, it becomes for ever the appan-

age of his descendants. I will not do things hastily; but Midone must be my wife."

He waited in the hope of again meeting his beloved; but Ursula had recovered, and with renewed health came renewed vigilance, and Midone's rides were now confined to the forest through which runs the brook Annevoie.

After one or two attempts to see Midone, De Berlaymont found that he could wait no longer, and he sent by a trusty messenger to the lord of Bioulx his proposals for the hand of his daughter. The letter was delivered to the baron just before the midday meal, when hunger had made him even more fiery than usual. He read the letter, and then he raged and swore like a madman; he tore his beard, and sputtered forth oaths that made some of his roughest followers wince; after which he ordered the bearer of the letter to be hanged on the highest battlements. Father Peter, however, who had just come into the hall to say grace, and stood in the doorway pale with horror at the torrent of profanity that flowed from his patron's lips, slipped quickly away and warned the men of Montaigle of their danger. Then, hurrying back into the hall, he saw that Ursula had been summoned, and was standing pale and trembling as if with palsy before the mad baron.

He bade her begone within the space of half an hour, and also he bade her tell Midone never from that time to appear in his sight. She might inhabit the castle; but if she once came into her father's presence, she should be confined to her chamber for the rest of her days.

Weeks went by, and when Midone recovered from the illness caused by her father's anger, she found that Ursula had indeed departed, and that her life was little less lonely than that of her father's captives in the dungeons below the towers of Château Bioulx. Her usual attendants had been dismissed and replaced by strangers, and it seemed to Midone that at first these women watched her closely; but she was too unhappy to do anything but weep over her miserable life. She had loved her father in spite of his severity, and she longed to see his face again. Ursula had been the only mother she had ever known, and the girl pined for the fond incessant care which had taken all small difficulties from her life. In vain did Father Peter exhort her to be resigned and patient. She could not reconcile herself to her solitary life, and the one secret that she had kept to herself gnawed at her heart and wasted her beauty; she neglected her dress, her golden hair hung disordered on her shoulders. She longed to see Gilles

de Berlaymont, and she knew that her longing was hopeless. She dared not venture on the road to Namur; for in those troublous times it was not safe to ride along the highroad without some armed followers, and she dreaded that these would have received orders to attack the lord of Berlaymont if they should chance to meet by the way.

There was a shrine in the forest of Annevoie beside the brook of that name, and one day Midone, telling her maids she was going to pray in the chapel, left them seated beneath the shade of the trees, and followed the windings of the brook. Soon she reached the little rustic building, and, kneeling before the altar, she prayed for happiness; but her thoughts wandered, and all unconsciously she began to trace with her finger on a moss-grown stone the name of De Berlaymont. All at once there rose up beside her the form of a tall man. A large cloak wrapped him round so as entirely to hide his form, and a large flapping hat hid his face all but his bushy black beard. Midone rose up hastily, and hurried out of the chapel; but the stranger followed her closely.

Drawn by some spell, against her better judgment, Midone turned and looked at him. "Do not fly," he said; and then flinging himself at her feet, he cried out passionately, "I am a friend."

His voice thrilled Midone with ecstasy; she turned red and then pale, and gazed with eager eyes as he flung off his disguise and showed that he was De Berlaymont. She clasped her hands and made one step towards him; but she could not speak.

"Beloved," he said, "fear nothing, but trust yourself to me, and we will fly to Montaigle. Am I not the chosen of your heart? Your father will relent when he sees that you love me. Trust me, beloved Midone."

Midone burst into tears.

"Heaven direct me," she said; "I know not what to do."

De Berlaymont did not wait for further answer. He clasped her in his arms, and, shrouded in his cloak, placed her before him on the horse which he had tied to a tree close by, and rode away with her to Montaigle. Midone's damsels waited and waited, and then searched anxiously for their mistress through the forest.

But the news soon reached the Château de Bioulx that Midone had fled to Montaigle; and, indeed, Gilles de Berlaymont had no wish for concealment when Midone had become his wife.

When the baron learned that his daughter had fled with her lover, he swore that he would not sleep till he had taken vengeance on De Berlaymont. He summoned

his men-at-arms and bade them get ready to start at once for Montaigle. Accordingly he set out at night-fall, and before dawn he had reached the valley of the Molignée. Soon he made a fierce attack on the fortress; arrows and darts flew like hail, and red-hot missiles fell hissing on the battlements. But De Berlaymont had not allowed himself to be surprised. The battlements of Montaigle were manned with fighting-men, and when the assailants scrambled like cats up the steep rock and gained the ramparts, the defenders shot them down like pigeons, and they fell back wounded and dying into the river below. De Bioulx urged them on, and twice they bravely scaled this impregnable rock, and mounted the battlements which rose from it bristling with lances. In vain—they were thrust down with lance and sword thrusts, or blinded and stunned by flights of bolts and stones.

When De Berlaymont saw this, he called for his horse, and, followed by his squires, he flew like a falcon down from the heights of Montaigle into the meadow below, and fell on the flying men of Bioulx. There was a fierce fight, a terrible slaughter; the river ran red with blood; but the men of Montaigle triumphed, and the followers of De Bioulx fled or were left bleeding and dying in the valley.

Arnolf of Bioulx stood alone; he would not fly. Covered with blood and dust he advanced on Gilles de Berlaymont. They struck fiercely at one another, but as the swords clashed together, a figure clad in white came flying down the hill, and flung itself between the combatants.

It was Midone—pale and terror-stricken, her golden hair streaming over her shoulders, the sight of her husband and father in mortal combat had agonised her gentle soul. She flung herself on her knees, clasped her arms round her father, and implored him to forgive her and to give her back his love.

De Berlaymont stood still, deeply moved by the sight of this angel of peace, an irresistible herald, he thought, of union between the two families. Surely De Bioulx would yield to her entreaty? But Arnolf de Bioulx was not to be appeased. Maddened with rage, he struck Midone fiercely with his sword, and the girl fell dead at his feet, her golden hair and white gown dabbled with blood. At this sight De Berlaymont felt the old hatred spring to life anew; he threw himself with mighty force upon De Bioulx and plunged his sword into his heart; the wretched father fell lifeless on the body of his child.

Gilles De Berlaymont left his desolate home; the

scene of his brief happiness and of Midone's death had become intolerable; he gave up his possessions, and, putting on the Cross, went to fight the infidels in the Holy Land.

But it has grown late while we have been pondering the sad fate of these lovers. Unwillingly we say good-bye to the charming ruins and the luxuriant wilderness of blossoms and beauty among the mouldering stones. As we drive home, the moon is setting behind the hills, purple-black in their depth of shadow; poplar-trees against the hills are olive-tinted; now a mist rises from the fields below, and a foreground of rich, newly-turned earth is chocolate in its warm colour.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHÂTEAU OF VÈVE-CELLES.

> For over all there hung a cloud of fear;
> A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
> And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
> The place is haunted!
>
> HOOD.

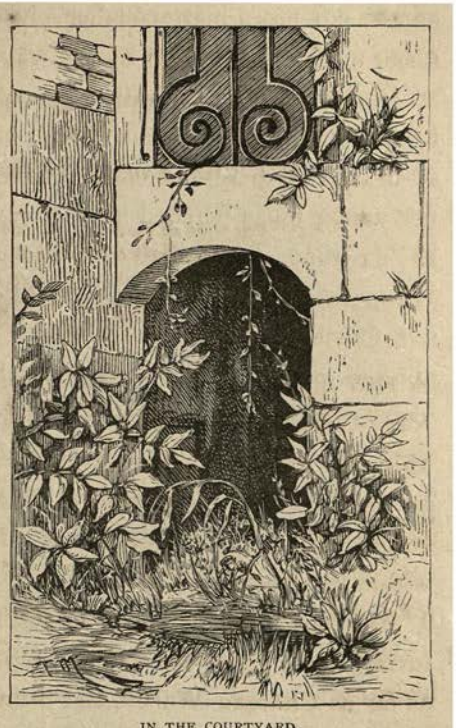
A FEW miles from Dinant-sur-Meuse is the Château of Vêve-Celles, deserted some years ago, while still habitable, by its owners, for no apparent reason, unless it be because of the obscure yet fatal doom which has seemed to follow the fortunes of those who dwelt within its massive old walls.

We had already driven along the road beside the lovely Lesse; now it was proposed to follow this route as far as Château Walzin, and from thence to take an adventurous and almost unfrequented way to Vève through meadows and across rivers, so as to get the best possible idea of the scenery of the Lesse.

Fording rivers in a cumbrous *char-à-banc*, with four

horses, seemed at first a hazardous proposal, but we were assured there was no danger.

The appointed morning looked heavy, and threatened rain—one of the party said she hoped there might be a storm when we got to Vève, as she should like to see lightning flash and hear thunder roll through the deserted old rooms; others demurred about weather—but our friend, the bright organiser of the expedition, was hopeful and determined, and at ten o'clock the *char-à-banc* drove up to the door of the Hotel of the Golden Head.



IN THE COURTYARD.

We were nine, and there was some little delay in arranging the party to the best advantage. Our

youngest lady and our three gentlemen were artists, and the other young lady was a poet. It was therefore necessary to distribute these gifted personages among our more matter-of-fact selves, so that we might glean a little inspiration by the way.

Finally, two of the artists placed themselves on the front bench. Another—a quiet, philosophic individual—chose the driver as his *compagnon de voyage;* our fair young muse perched herself on the high seat at the back, perhaps—who shall say?—to be nearer the clouds. However, she had a steady, middle-aged companion, our fourth artist; so we felt that she would not be allowed to take an aërial flight "while rapt in visions high." After all, four prosaic middle-aged ladies found themselves *vis-à-vis* in the centre of the carriage, supposed to be the safest place for the quietest and dullest part of the company. I am, however, inclined to think that these prosaic persons enjoyed themselves very much in their own way.

Jim, that lovable and most sagacious beast, divided his time between the river and the carriage.

Then the genial, dignified landlord of the hotel, surrounded by his daughters, wished us a prosperous journey, and we drove out of the courtyard. The drive out of Dinant along the beautiful gray-green

Meuse, with its lofty falaises crowned with trees, and the pretty town nestling into the side of the gray rocks, was as pleasant as possible, and we seemed also to be a cause of great admiration to the townsfolk. Soon we had passed through the cleft in the huge dark cliff, the Roche-à-Bayard, and, parting from the Meuse where the Lesse joins it at Anseremme, we followed the course of this lovely Belgian river, perhaps the loveliest of any in the Ardennes, with the exception of the Amblève.

The valley is narrow; our road runs close beside the river, within hearing of its pleasant song, only screened from it by slender-stemmed trees. Through these we see the wooded hills, opposite, rising to some height; every now and then great gray rocks show among the green leafage.

Overhead the trees nearly meet; long bramble arms stretch out from the hedge on the right, and some of us have to duck and dodge so as to keep our hats on.

The day has cleared: there is no hope of a thunderstorm at La Vève, and the sun comes streaming warmly down upon us, for the lane we have been following ends suddenly beside the Lesse, and we must cross the river. The stream is deep and strong

to-day; in a dry season it is much shallower, our driver says.

However, our four horses flounder into it willingly, and we are soon dragged up to the top of the opposite bank. Jim swims gallantly across, and evidently enjoys his bath; we clatter over the narrow bridge with an exquisite view up and down the river, in which the bushes marvellously reflect themselves. Here is a change of scene. We are in a green meadow, purpled with autumn crocus and circled half-way round with huge gray crags. Up the side of some of these are trained pear-trees, for there is a château near at hand belonging to a rich banker of Brussels. A little way on, the trees that clothe the base of the gray rocks have already changed colour, and over them the crags jut forward in grand round projections, like the entrance towers of a baronial castle.

Soon after this we reach the mill of Walzin. The river here divides into three, and a little way on, a perpendicular ridge of red-brown rock rises abruptly from the dark water, crowned by the Château de Walzin.

The *char-à-banc* meantime had crossed the river again, and was sent back empty to fetch the stragglers, Jim going with it to see that all was right. Presently we reached another green and crocus-pied meadow,

skirted by the ever-winding Lesse. But soon the valley narrowed again; whichever way we looked rocks closed us in; huge gray boulders, partly clothed with ivy, and among them the feathery green of birch-trees, the slender satin trunks telling white against the crags which overhung the grassy meadow across which we slowly drove.

Some of us thought this must be like the Happy Valley of Rasselas, from which there was no outlet. The purple-stained grass, the flowered and berried hedges, the trees full of light and beauty; the river singing its pleasant tune, and glistening merrily in the sunshine,—all spoke of almost Utopian peace; only the stern gray rocks reminded us that reality lay in the world beyond them.

And now we rouse up from dreams among the crocuses to cross the river again, some of us holding tightly to the carriage; for though the stream is narrow, we jolt and shake considerably over the large stones in the river-bed; and one of our middle-aged ladies is nervous, and does not enjoy the crossing as much as Jim does.

We find a farm on the other side of the water, and learn that this is Chaleux. Some of us get down, and, wandering through the little garden and across a field

starred with wild-flowers, we come in sight of the rocks of Chaleux.

These rocks are very impressive: huge gray masses of crag overhang the river below. A little boat mirrored in the water is moored here to ferry foot-passengers over. One of the rocks stands sideways, detached from the rest—a tall, tapering block, standing out like a Cleopatra's Needle from the lofty ridge behind it.

On one of these rocks stood the châlet which, tradition says, gave its name to the little village below.

Many years ago, a charming girl of good family loved a handsome young peasant of the neighbourhood, and met him in a little hut or châlet which he built for her on the top of the rocks. The meetings were discovered, and the girl was shut up by her angry parents in a convent at Dinant. One evening, however, she contrived to steal the key of the garden-gate, and, hurrying across the fields, she followed the windings of the Lesse till they brought her at nightfall to the foot of the rock on which stood her lover's hut. She climbed the rock, and then, worn out with the fatigue of her long journey, she fell sound asleep on the floor of the châlet.

While she slept a violent storm arose; the fierce

wind and rain lashed the river till, swollen beyond its bed, it overflowed on all sides, and became a mighty stream. The little hut, overthrown by the fury of the wind, was whirled into the foaming torrent below, and borne along till it broke in pieces.

The unhappy girl, roused by the uproar around her, had clasped her rosary firmly between both hands. She called on Notre Dame des Agonisants, but the torrent swept her away.

Next morning her body was found hanging from a nut-tree by the miraculous rosary.

The lord of the manor gave her body a fitting burial, and the lover became gardener to the monks of Waulsart, near Dinant, and died some years after in the "odour of sanctity."

Ever since this sad tragedy the little village at the foot of the cliff has been called Chaleux.

Once more we have to cross the river, grown much wider here, and we land in a dale if possible more enchanting than any we have yet seen; these long green valleys, with wood-crowned heights on either side, reminded us strangely of dales in the North Riding at home, though the gray rocks, showing here so constantly, were out of keeping with the reminiscence.

This valley was carpeted even more thickly than

the others had been with exquisite pale purple crocus cups—with hearts of flame and stalks of snow. The river traversed the valley, and, looking back, we saw that the lofty rocks had closed us in—every now and then on the left across the water the dark side of the cliff parted and gave glimpses of a gorge purple in its shadow, opening into yet another valley, betrayed by the faint line of distant mist, and a twinkling, thread-like stream which came hurrying to feed the silver-shining Lesse.

Our driver said there were wonderful caverns in some of these rocks, and also at Chaleux and Furfooz. One of these is the Trou des Nutons, said to be tenanted by tiny brown dwarfs, half-benevolent, half-malicious beings, but wondrously clever—a sort of Robin Goodfellows, judging by the pranks they play. They are specially kind to widows and orphans. Rock caverns are frequent through the Walloon country ; sometimes they are of large extent, as the famous grotto of Han sur Lesse and others. They have been much explored and discussed, and in some of them have been found fossil remains, bones of antediluvian animals, and also human bones and skulls, said to have belonged to the lowest type of mankind.

And now our party has gathered together again, for

some of us have been busy plucking wild-flowers; Jim runs in much excitement from one friend to another; and we find that the Lesse has made another sharp curve, and once more crosses our path. Here it is in front of us, bordered by low gray willows, and, as these open just before us, we see the pretty sparkling stream, and a meadow on its farther side.

I believe we crossed the river eight times before we reached our journey's end, and we must certainly have looked very picturesque in these crossings, half in shadow, half in golden light, the four stout horses plunging and struggling, the gaily-painted carriage, etc., in the midst of the gray-green tree-bordered river. The sundry passages seemed safely enough accomplished; but we afterwards learned that, spite of his genial demeanour and lively anecdotes, our driver's mind had not been completely at ease. "The horses might have taken to swimming," Félix confessed to one of our artists, "and then we must have been carried down the river. No other driver in Belgium could have taken you through as I have done."

Just before we reached the last ford we drove along such a narrow tree-cumbered road that it was well we had again left some of our party behind. We were only four in the *vis-à-vis*, and branches from either side

thrust themselves so across the carriage that it was evident they were not used to visitors. It is said that a stout branch lifted one of the occupants from the middle bench on to that in front (she was immediately christened "Flocon" by one of her companions); but this sounds too much like a legend of the romantic region.

We were close to the ford when the horses started and went on rapidly, frightened at an apparition beside the road. There sat a man, as brown and uncanny as a Nuton, his black mane of hair mingled with a beard which seemed to reach his knees. He was surrounded by osiers and chippings from newly-made basket-work. As we passed he was at work upon one of the huge osier trays used for holding the flat fruit-tarts which Walloons devour in such astonishing quantities. Its bare ribs looked like an enormous starfish, as he held it in his hands under the shadow of the birch-trees.

We had begun to cross the water for the last time, when we heard joyous cries from the stragglers we had left in a purple-starred meadow, and we saw them hastening towards us with their hands full of blackberry branches laden with berries.

We were all rather tired by the long adventurous journey, and the ripe shining fruit was intensely refresh-

CHÂTEAU DE VÈVE-CELLES.

ing both to sight and taste; it looked so lovely too, gleaming in tempting, many-coloured clusters on the thorny red arms.

But we had not far to go now, and at a turn in the road there was a general exclamation of delight. There stood the square massive castle of Vève-Celles, cornered with round black-capped towers, frowning down on us from the hill it crowns.

The hill is quite detached from the neighbouring falaises, and the position of the castle is one of much strength.

Tradition says that Pepin d'Heristal came with his wife Plectruda, to consult St. Hadelin, the hermit of Celles, hard by—and, being charmed with the beauty of the country, he built a hunting-lodge on the hill of Vève in the year 685. The Normans destroyed this simple dwelling; but about four hundred years later a vast castle was built at Vève, which became the property of the Beauforts.

This strong fortress was attacked and burnt by the Dinantais in the wars of the period; and the present castle, a smaller building, dates from the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is now the property of the Count de Liedkerke Beaufort.

As the road descends we lose sight of the château

again, but soon we have passed the few cottages that form the village, and we are close to the entrance where once gates have been ;—one of the old stone posts lies prostrate, ivy fast growing over it ; and near this, we learned, was a stone, once in the castle wall itself, bearing this defiant inscription

Veux-tu savoir qui l'on m'appelle,
À merci viens au fort de Celle !

The road on the left leads to the village called Celles, it is supposed, from the cell or cellule founded by the hermit Hadelin in the seventh century. The church of Celles is a large and very remarkable building of a very early period. The double crypt is very curious and interesting, but we could not thoroughly explore it, as much of it was under water. The interior of the church is sadly destroyed by whitewash, but there are many curious tombs in it. The tomb of St. Hadelin is in the chapel of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, a little way above the church.

Coming back to the ruined entrance of the castle, we climbed up the ascent to a sort of grassed platform in front of the entrance. The artists seemed inclined to go into the deserted place and fall to work at once; but we, hungry ordinary mortals, demurred to this, and represented that genius required the vulgar support contained

in the promising-looking hampers taken from our carriage, which some men in blouses were carrying up the hill.

Our dinner was soon spread under a huge tree; the low stone wall round the grassed platform (really the top of the kitchen-garden wall belonging to the château) made a capital bench for some of us, and the rest sat on the grass. I think we all did fair justice to our simple feast—certainly we were very merry over it. One of our artists, the sunshine of our holiday, had the kindness to walk down to the little village below, to order coffee and cakes for a wind-up.

After this we all dispersed into the château. We enter by an arched passage between the two gateway towers. This passage gives a half turn into a five-sided courtyard; grass and nettles grow everywhere, and brambles cling over a rusty iron railing beside a flight of broken steps. There are doorways on every side, but the side under which we enter the courtyard is much longer than the rest. Across it runs a quaint open gallery of two stories. The fronts of the galleries are supported in the centre by a stout iron pillar, and are partly screened by a half-timbered parapet, from which the yellow plaster is mouldering away, showing patches of the red bricks which it has covered. From each gallery a series of rough black arches supports

the story above. The roof rises steeply, crowned with quaint chimney-stacks, and dotted with tiny dormer

GALLERY, VÈVE-CELLES.

windows; in the midst of these is a bell-turret, but the bell is there no longer. Yet, neglected and uncared-for

as the château looks from this point, we were not prepared for the desolation that lay within the house itself.

Even as we went in, a feeling of weirdness came over us; it seemed

> "A dwelling-place, and yet no habitation;
> A house, but under some prodigious ban
> Of excommunication."

The first large room was strewn with books—English, French, Italian, and Spanish, Latin, and perhaps Greek, but almost all torn and defaced, left there, seemingly as worthless, lying in heaps against the wall and scattered about. The paper hung from the walls like fluttering banners, and close by, in a small round chamber of one of the towers, was a large black box with gaping lid, full of manuscripts, the paper yellow with age. Close by another box stood open, showing piles of letters, and what seemed to be title-deeds and diaries, all discoloured and mouldering, and heaped in inextricable confusion.

There were family photographs, too, one of a lovely girl, left to perish among the dust and squalor of the place, a companion of loathsome things; for

> "The centipede along the threshold crept;
> The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
> And in its winding-sheet the maggot slept
> At every nook and angle."

It was terribly ghastly and desolate. We felt glad that a proposal to dine in one of the old rooms had not been carried out. The artists had already set to work, one in the grass-grown courtyard, two in a deserted room upstairs, and the quiet philosopher among the bats in the top story of the quaint gallery, where long bunches of tobacco-leaves were hung up to dry—a sort of withered link with the outer world. Some of the ladies rested—one, our many-gifted scholar, seated herself on the black box, and was soon absorbed in devouring the crabbed old MSS., one of which she afterwards told us bore the signature of Louis Quinze.

Some of us wandered hither and thither, "some internal prompting bade me mount the gloomy stairs and lonely;" but, however gloomy and lonely, I wished to be alone in the old place. It seemed the only way of linking myself to the intense desolation, and so of realising its meaning.

Truly Hood's verses might have been written in the place—

> "No other sound or stir of life was there,
> Except my steps in solitary chamber,
> From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
> From chamber into chamber."

Each flight of the "dreary stairs" carried me into a deeper sense of mystery, till I expected to find, lurking

in some inner room or forgotten corner, the Witness of the Past, the clue to the strange doom that has fastened on this fine old mansion.

Near the top of the first staircase a curious tesselated pavement led me to the chapel, a small room with windows and niches within a larger chamber. The crucifix still stands on the altar, and there is less squalor here than elsewhere; but dust lies thickly on the floor, and cobwebs curtain the windows. It seemed the saddest ruin of all. I went on to the bedrooms; in one of these, entered through a smaller room, is a portrait, or the remains of one, over the empty hearth. It is painted on panel, and the injuries it has suffered give a strange weirdness to the expression of the face; one might fancy

> "The old Ancestral Spirit knew and felt
> The House's malediction."

There was no bed in the alcove; the place was filled with straw, into which Jim, who had followed me, at once plunged in search of rats.

I wondered what was the story of this room and of the dressing-room within it. This has been hung with tapestry, some of which clings in faded mouldy shreds to the walls; from the cobwebbed dust-laden windows I could see the smiling valley below, and the heights

opposite crowned by the Count's new château of Miranda. I turned from the window and looked round the room; there was nothing to see, and yet it felt as if one might see something by seeking for it. Something—it might have been the thick, dust-laden air—seemed to make thought leaden, and to clog all power of enjoyment. I left this room, and explored the long galleries with suites of deserted chambers leading from them. I saw other pictures, other traces of habitation—a cracked mirror in the wall, a true-lover's knot in stucco above a mantelshelf, traces of blue and blackened gold on it; but none of these had for me the weird fascination of that inner room with its tapestried cabinet de toilette. I felt that I would not dare to go into it in the gloom of evening. I was glad to leave it finally, for I found myself drawn back there again and again by some secret fascination, till I grew almost sure the walls could mutter some dark story buried under the cobwebs of the past.

I climbed up to another story, and found my way to the grenier. There is little light here, except where it comes in broad patches through some rare opening, making the darkness of far-off corners awful. As I went heedfully across the uneven, decaying boards, where truly

> "The floor was redolent of mould and must,
> The fungus in the rotten seams had quickened,"

something stirred in the gloomiest corner of the vast dim place. I held my breath and listened. In the middle of the floor a step-ladder was fixed to the beam above, and I saw that the beams and rafters over me were only open to the roof-tree so far as I stood—a good half of the grenier being boarded over; there was plainly a smaller story overhead. I began to think that some creature might inhabit this upper story who shunned the light of day. My way led past the dark corner whence the sound had come, but I felt chilled and clammy; it would be easy, I thought, to go down as I had come up, and so gain the other staircase from the gallery below, to avoid passing that corner. In an instant a whirr of wings rushed by me, almost touching my cheek. It was only a bat. I hurried on joyfully up some rickety stairs, and then along a gloomy passage, till I came to the topmost room of one of the round towers; just outside it I heard footsteps, and met one of our party who had only joined us at the entrance to the castle.

He went on first across the crazy boarding which led into the tower, and I heard a shout of surprise, for in this eerie nook, alone in her turret, sat, not an owl, but our young muse diligently reading.

Leaving her to her studies, I went down the next stair-flight, till I reached one of the long corridors with windows looking into the courtyard. It had become very dark while I had been groping and stumbling in the grenier. I was alone again; the gloom now in this gallery was almost awful. All at once a vivid flash of blue lightning struck across the darkness, making the courtyard as light as day, and then came a crashing peal of thunder, loud enough to bring some of those fragile slate dormers perched on the roof spinning down from their elevation. Here was the realisation of the wish of one of our party at starting; not often does fulfilment follow so quickly on desire. Soon came another vivid flash, and then a crashing of thunder that seemed to make the old house rock. The stillness that followed was awful: it seemed as if Nature were gathering up her forces for some dread uproar; and then in the dead hush came the faint toll of a bell —only one stroke, as if a phantom in one of the far-off chambers of the building had been summoned home. It proved, however, to be a prank of two of our young ones, who, having found out a bell-rope in one of the towers, had pulled at it with such good will that they ended its powers, for with its last note the bell collapsed and vanished from the scene.

The storm was soon over, but we felt that our holi-

day had also ended, and that we should not reach Dinant till after dark. So our artists were summoned from their sketching, our scholar from her MSS., and our Muse from her turret, and we bade good-bye to the gloomy old chateau, so full of strange memories, and started, not quite in the order in which we had come, but still very happily, and with a store for future thoughts.

There was a Ducasse going on in the village of Celles; all the young men and girls of the place were dancing the polka round a cart, in which sat the musicians; about them were booths, with cakes and sweeties —it was a sort of fair.

We did not ford the river again, but kept steadily to the highroad, and were lighted by glow-worms along its banks till we drew near the Meuse. All at once the air became as light as day; in a village across the river they were letting off fireworks and burning blue and red fire, and there was a fair going on.

It was a sudden rousing to reality; for, though murmurs and snatches of talk were heard now and then, I fancy some of us were still dreaming over the old Château de Vève, and pondering its strange doom.

> O'er all there hangs the shadow of a fear;
> By sense of mystery the spirit daunted
> Says plainly as a whisper in the ear,
> The place is haunted!

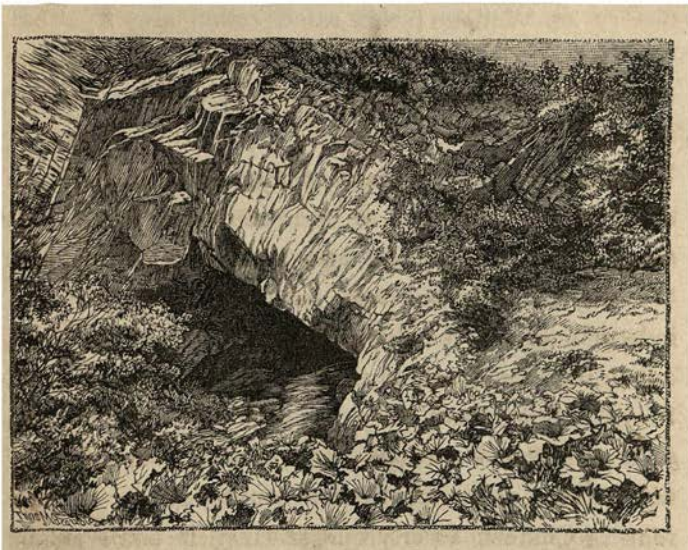
CHAPTER VIII.

BOUILLON AND THE SEMOIS.

WE were very sorry to leave charming Dinant and its lovely surroundings, and we had received so much kindness from our friends and from the people at the hôtel. We felt, too, that we had left much unvisited; for, indeed, many weeks may be spent at Dinant without exhausting its wealth of excursions. The châteaux of Freyr, Ardenne, and others, are well worth visiting, and at Freyr, too, is one of the remarkable grottoes of which there are many in this country; there are the ruins of Château Thierry, and at Hastière and Waulsart are some of the most picturesque points of the Meuse.

There is also the celebrated grotto of Han, and the way to it through the l'Homme valley, to be reached from Dinant either by Rochefort or Ciney, and thence by train to Jemelle; but we had come abroad to see the Ardennes, and having taken this charming rest at Dinant, we would not be tempted from our plan of

route. The grotto of Han is magnificently described in Georges Sand's *Malgré Tout*, and is said to be well worth seeing, though I have heard it called disappointing, also the cavern where the Lesse disappears.



WHERE THE LESSE DISAPPEARS.

Some of our acquaintances of the Tête d'Or were also bound for the Semois, and we had a very pleasant journey to Bouillon together. We went by rail to Sedan, and the first part of the journey so far as Mezières-Charleville is most varied and charming. We pass through the gardens of Freyr, and Waulsart, next

comes Hastière-Lavaux on the left, where the scenery is exquisite; opposite is Hastière-Pardela, with its fine church, all that remains of a once famous abbey. There is a little chapel beside this river dedicated to the martyr St. Walhère; this saint, called also St. Vohi, was born at Bouvignes in the thirteenth century, and became so noted for his virtues as curé of Onhaye, that the bishop of the diocese created him dean of Florenne. This post gave him authority over all the clergy of the district. A vicar of Hastière, who was also nephew to Walhère, had given great scandal to his congregation by his irregular life; St. Walhère came over one day to see him, and after trying the effect of gentle rebukes bade him fear the anger of Heaven, and threatened him with excommunication. Walhère then went on to the abbey of Hastière, and when about to take boat and cross the river on his way to Onhaye, he observed that his nephew had taken the place of the boatman, and was waiting to ferry him across. St. Walhère thought this a good opportunity to renew his exhortations, when all at once his cousin, raising the punt pole, struck the dean so violent a blow on his head that his skull was fractured. The murderer then flung his uncle's dead body into the Meuse, hoping that before morning there would be no trace left of his crime. But Walhère's

body did not sink. It was washed ashore on the left-hand bank of the Meuse, where the fountain of St. Walhère still exists.

Next morning the body was discovered and recognised, and the men of Bouvignes claimed it, in order that they might give it a grand burial; but when the body was placed on the funeral car provided by the monks of Hastière, the horses refused to move. All means were tried, but the horses stood as if petrified. No one knew what to do, till there came forward a pious widow of Onhaye.

"I will lend," she said, "two young heifers to drag the car, on condition that they are left to choose their own road."

Her words sounded inspired to the puzzled crowd, and when she appeared leading two white heifers, they were at once yoked to the car and left to choose their road. At once they began to mount the falaise beside them, making their way through bushes and briers, and up a part of the rocky cliff so steep that no one had ever tried to climb it. On they went towards Onhaye, but when they reached Bonair, where now stands a chapel dedicated to St. Walhère, they stopped to rest. Then they went on till they reached the parish church of Onhaye, and the body was placed in a vault in the

chancel. It seems to have been an ingenious manœuvre on the part of the widow to get possession of the remains of the saint for her native town, for, naturally, if the heifers were left to their own devices, they would take the road that led homewards, and the steep climb up the mountain may be a bit of embroidery on the story, although it is said traces of the tracks made by the heifers may still be seen, and their footprints on the rocks. The intercession of St. Walhère, like that of St. Hubert, and of St. Cornély of Brittany, is believed to have a special efficacy in cases of cattle disease, and St. Walhère has also a reputation for the cure of headache.

After we left Hastière the valley widened, the cliffs were no longer so abrupt and picturesque; sometimes they were thickly wooded, and then again there were trees only half-way down, and the green slopes below were covered with orchards, which seemed to have a greater show of leaves than of fruit. Now we are in a tunnel bored through the rock, and we have lost sight of our lovely green-gray river, and then, as we issue from the darkness, we find ourselves suddenly close beside the Meuse, which takes so abrupt a curve that we are soon opposite the road we have been following.

Now the Meuse appears a land-locked lake, for the valley closes as we look ahead, and on the left we gaze

back at a gorge between the hills, purple in its darkness. At the mouth of this darkness a little green island lies, tree-covered; near it, on the mainland, a white vine-clad house is built out over the water, supported by an arch—the house and the vine leaves glow with sunshine, the arch is full of cool shadow.

Now Givet comes in sight, its citadel rising behind the church towers.

A short delay at Givet gave us time to walk out and see the steeple, described most truthfully and graphically by Victor Hugo in his Letters:—"Le brave architecte a pris un bonnet carré de prêtre ou d'avocat; sur ce bonnet carré, il a échafaudé un saladier renversé; sur le fond de ce saladier devenu plateforme, il a posé un sucrier; sur ce sucrier, une bouteille, un soleil emmanché dans le goulot par le rayon inférieur vertical; et enfin, sur le soleil, un coq embroché dans le rayon vertical supérieur." The description is as exact as it is quaint.

We had come by train to Givet for the sake of seeing the valley of the Meuse; but in order properly to explore the Semois, we afterwards found out, although no one seemed to know it at Dinant, we should have driven or gone by diligence to Gedinne, and then taken a walking tour beside this lovely river to Bouillon.

This may be easily done by even moderate walkers, the greatest distance to be accomplished between two stages of the journey being fifteen kilomètres (about nine English miles), usually far less. From Gedinne to Bohan, Bohan to Membre, Membre to Vresse, and Vresse to Alle, and then there is a splendid walk of about fifteen kilomètres on the left-hand side of the

WASHING BY THE RIVER.

river, by Rochehaut and Botassart to Bouillon. The neighbourhood of Bohan, and from Bohan to Membre and Alle, are quite the finest bits of the Semois, and one loses much in driving to Alle from Bouillon, as one has to keep to the other bank, by way of Corbion.

Still, I should much have regretted the railway journey, for after we left Givet the Meuse presented a succession of lovely pictures. The day was a great

success—perfect sunshine—so that no point lost its due effect. At Fumay the river again looked like some huge lake, its surface rippled as if by a breeze. The lofty wooded hills opposite are shouldered by others even loftier as the river curves away at either end of the valley; and on a promontory of land stretching out into the middle of the water stands the little town, its church spire surrounded by houses which seem to rise out of this peaceful lake.

A turn of the road and Fumay has vanished, and presently we come to a narrower part of the valley, very still and lonely. Only one small cottage stands beside the river. It seems entirely isolated from the rest of the world by the dark and frowning hills.

We stopped at Mezières-Charleville, and finding we had two hours to wait for the Sedan train, we went into Charleville, a very dull, uninteresting town, except for its somewhat quaint market-place, surrounded by substantial-looking houses with very high roofs. We lunched at the inn, and asked the waiter if there were anything to see in Charleville. He opened his eyes, shook his head, and threw up his hands, flourishing his table-napkin disdainfully. Plainly he was not a native of dull little Charleville.

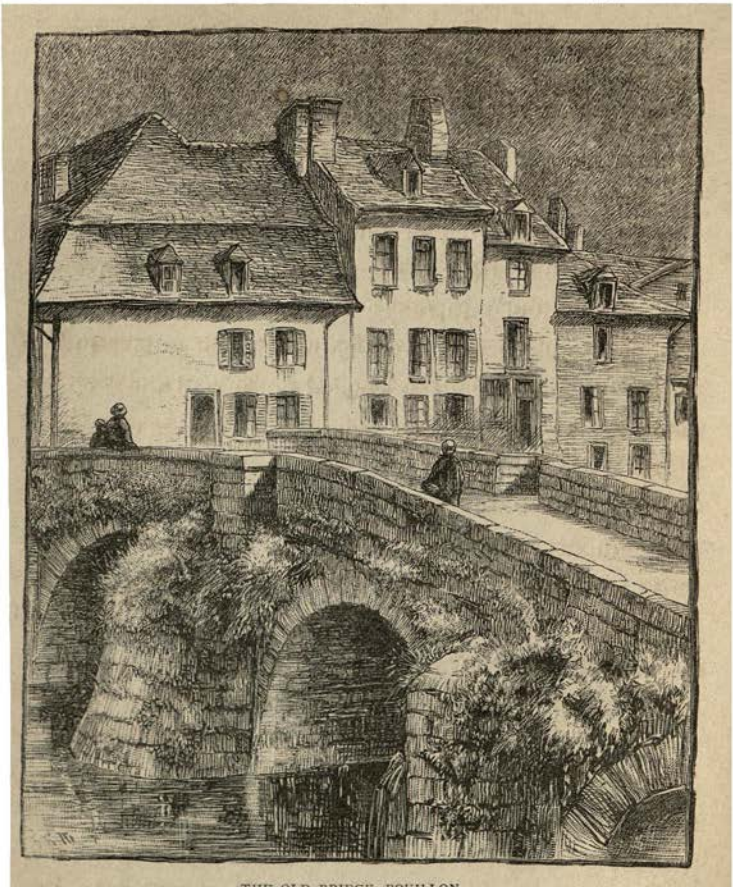
"There is nothing, Monsieur," he said, "absolutely nothing to be seen here."

After Charleville the country is dull and flat till we reach Sedan station. We were amused by the way in which our luggage travelled from this station to the town. A large truck (our driver said there were frequently two) was hooked on to the steps of the omnibus, and on this the luggage was placed. We had in the diligence a very interesting little French boy, travelling with his bonne all the way from Paris to Bouillon for country air. He was only eight years old; but when we stopped at the octroi so that the douane officers might examine the luggage on the truck, he flew into a passion, his little pale face grew scarlet, and he clenched his small fists, and shook them at the douane men: "Je ne veux pas qu'on touche à ma malle," he said, "je ne veux pas."

Sedan looked dirty and picturesque. After some delay we got into the diligence for Bouillon, going up and down and about the jolting streets. It was very interesting to find that our way lay across the battle-field of 1870. The conductor was very intelligent, and pointed out the position of the French and Prussian armies, and gave many details of the battle. The diligence took about three hours to reach Bouillon, crawling along at a snail's pace, with many uncomfortable jolts;

but our little French boy was so gay that he whiled the journey away for us. We reached at length the top of the last hill, and the view was very striking. Before us rose a very lofty hill, and between us and it yawned a valley that we felt must be of the deepest. We descend into it a little way, and all at once, far below, seemingly at our feet, is the dark, stern-looking fortress, the château fort de Bouillon. In reality it stands on a black rock of considerable height overlooking the Semois. From the lovely river rise steep wooded côtes, and these circle round the abrupt loop-like bend the Semois makes here, so that the town stands chiefly on a tree-girt peninsula, the castle being built on the neck of land which unites the promontory to the steep hill by which we descend. It is so steep that we go slowly, and have time to see the charming picture below. Two old quaint grass-grown bridges connect the part of the town built on the promontory—hemmed round by wooded falaises—with the rest of the town on the mainland, and we clatter across one of these bridges to reach our snug little inn, Hôtél des Postes, where the bill for two persons for two days and a half amounted to 23 fr. 55 c.

One of our party slept in the bed occupied by the late Emperor Napoleon on the night of September 3, after the battle of Sedan. The room remains just as



THE OLD BRIDGE, BOUILLON.

it was at that time. From the windows are seen, on the left, the old bridge; on the right, the castle.

Next morning it poured with rain, and we agreed that though in dry weather a very pleasant week may be spent in exploring the charms of the Semois, and although Bouillon must always be beautiful from its remarkable position yet this morning the deep valley, the river swollen and dark flowing close under our windows, and the black frowning castle above us, looked singularly gloomy.

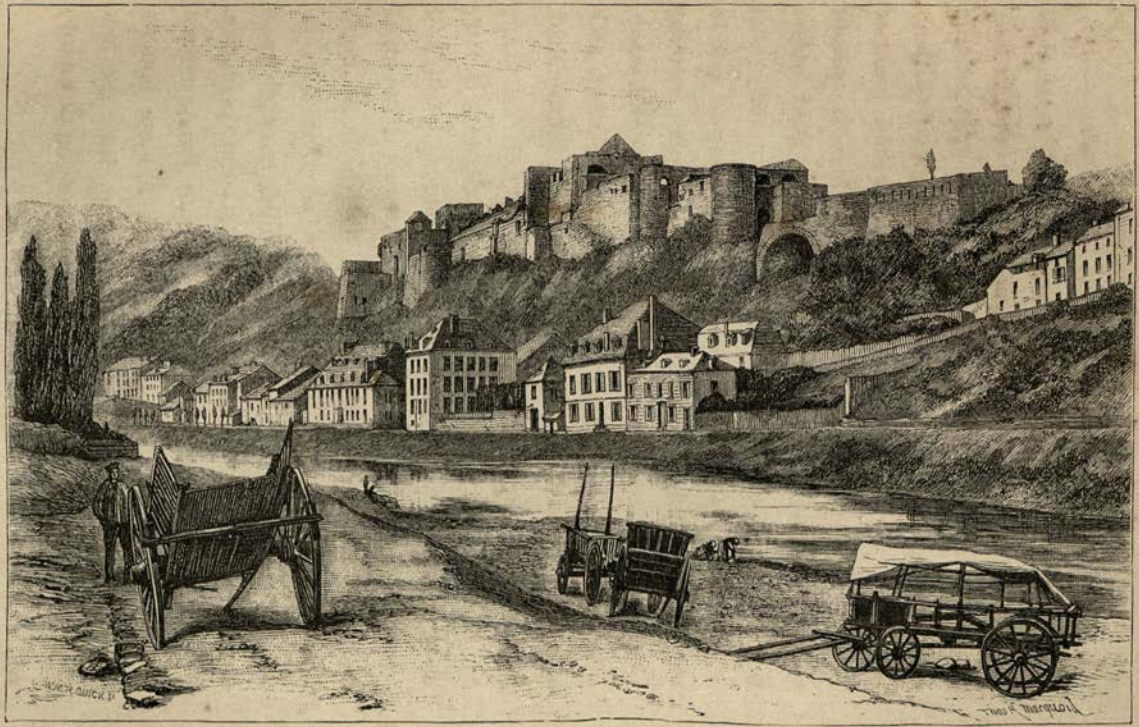
We went out to see the castle, the stronghold of Godfrey, Duke of Bouillon, the pupil of Peter the Hermit, and the leader of the first Crusade. The "Goffredo" of Tasso was an early hero of mine, and I had long wished to visit Bouillon. Godefroi de Bouillon was the sixth in descent from Godefroi l'Ardennais, who in the tenth century was the first Duke of Bouillon and Basse-Lorraine. Before that time the owners of the fortress had been simple Counts.

Bouillon seems to have been originally a nest of bandits and robbers, and the castle is said to have been built by Turpin, a Duke of Ardenne, in the eighth century, to deliver the country from the hordes of miscreants who had sheltered themselves in this out-of-the-way corner. The walls round the town have been destroyed; and in the castle itself, the lofty donjon and most of the towers were lowered, the chapel of St.

John, and the palace of the governor of the fortress, were destroyed, and many other injuries were done to the venerable old fortress during the short rule of the Dutchmen, when in 1815 the town was ceded to them by the Treaty of Vienna. King William had planned an entire renovation of this old relic, which he meant to surround with new fortifications, but he died before this utter ruin could be accomplished.

As we saw it from the town on the opposite side of the river, it looked a most imposing fortress, looming over the long steep valley of the Semois. But when, after crossing the bridge, we climbed up the steep rock and the esplanade, as the plateau in front of it is called, it appeared to us even more remarkable.

It is so dark, so very massive and gloomy, it rises so abruptly from the rock, out of the sides of which it seems to grow, that it is deeply impressive. To make its position more secure, the rock on which it stands has been deeply cleft in two places, so that it is inaccessible from the surrounding hills except by a drawbridge from the side that faces the peninsula. We stopped at the porter's lodge, which looks ancient and dreary, while the woman there lit a huge lantern, and we then entered, over a drawbridge, into the first gateway, between two dark towers. Looking down into



THE CASTLE OF BOUILLON.

the chasm spanned by the bridge, we saw its steep sides richly clothed with delicate ferns and flowers. The walls of the long vaulted passage we now entered dripped with water. Everywhere almost, in every chink of ruined wall, we found ferns, especially on the flights of broken steps, which seemed to lead in innumerable directions in this vast gloomy place. When we came out of the vaulted passage we found a second drawbridge, a much longer one. This second bridge effectually isolates the centre of the fortress from its outworks, and yet beyond this, and a gloomy vault to which it leads, are the remains of a moat, said to have been filled with water only when the fortress was besieged. Beyond this is another long vaulted passage, in which is the famous well said to reach to more than thirty feet below the level of the Semois. We came out of this vault, and followed our guide up some very rugged stone steps, which are hewn out of the cliff itself. It was so dark in the rock that our guide's lantern was absolutely necessary. A little way up she stopped, and bidding us come singly, she showed us one by one "Le fauteuil de Godefroi de Bouillon," a dark hole scooped out of the right side of the rock, with a sloping stone bench in it, very uncomfortable to sit on—the roof of the hole is very low, too, for a man of ordinary

height. There is a small opening to the air in the wall of rock opposite, but it is not easy to see out of this from Godfrey's arm-chair, though the great captain is supposed to have reconnoitred the country from this spy-hole. Another dark hole in the rock was, our guide said, the seat of Godfrey's aide-de-camp. It is interesting to learn that the great Crusader was in his youth by no means a dutiful son of the Church; he was the son of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, and of Ida, sister of Godefroi le Bossu. He is supposed to have been born at Baisy, near Nivelles, but he was brought up in the Ardennes by his pious mother, Ida, and his tutor, the famous Hermit Peter. He seems to have been early noted for daring feats of courage in hunting the wolves and wild boars of the Ardennes. His uncle, Godefroi le Bossu, the reigning Duke of Bouillon, being childless, had early chosen young Godfrey as his successor, and trained him to arms in the wars of Brabant and Flanders, so that when his uncle Godfrey died, and his uncle the Count of Namur, who had married Ida's eldest sister, and Matilda, the widow of le Bossu, tried to wrest his dukedom from the young heir, he was well able to defend it.

"Godfrey," says his historian, "saw, with secret joy, his uncle's standard planted before the donjon. Till now he had been only a man-at-arms, marching under

his uncle Godfrey's banner ; but the time had come to prove himself a worthy scion of the puissant and warlike race of Gustavus de Boulogne, and a single deed of arms claimed for him at once the consideration of all the barons of Lorraine, Belgium, and Germany. The Count of Namur was beaten at every point ; and the young captain made famous sorties, in one of which he flung down his uncle's standard, and cut his body-guard to pieces, so that the besieger had to beat a shameful retreat, overwhelmed with surprise at the cool prudence and dashing valour of the young duke.

"Thierry, Bishop of Verdun, had joined his forces to those of the Count of Namur. This bishop had owed much to former Dukes of Bouillon, and Godfrey resolved to punish his ingratitude. Accordingly, he seized on the bishop's castle of Chenay, and the terrified prelate was obliged to concede to him the title of Count of Verdun.

"At the end of the eleventh century Godfrey was at the taking of Rome, and played a very active part in its siege. But he fell seriously ill, and he vowed that, if he recovered, he would devote himself to the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre from the infidel Saracens.

"On his recovery he sold his castles of Chenay and

Mouzon to the Bishop of Verdun, and pawned, or, some authorities say, sold his Duchy of Bouillon to Obert, Bishop of Liège.

"Then he led the army of Crusaders to Jerusalem, and finally, having taken the Holy City, refused the title of King, unanimously offered him by his fellow-Crusaders, protesting that he 'would never wear a golden crown in the place where his Saviour had borne a crown of thorns.'

"This cession of the Duchy caused a series of interminable wars between the heirs of Godfrey the Prince-Bishops of Liège—now Dukes of Bouillon, and the De la Marcks, Princes of Sedan, who afterwards, in the person of the Wild Boar of Ardennes, became Dukes of Bouillon. But long after this the dukedom seems to have been hotly disputed. Sometimes it belonged to a Bishop of Liège, sometimes to a Prince of Sedan. At last, in 1591, in the reign of Henry IV. of France, Charlotte de la Marck, the last of the race of Sedan, married Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Viscount Turenne, whose heirs henceforth represented the rights of the De la Marcks.

"Finally, Louis XIV. took possession of Bouillon, and repaired the fortifications of both town and castle. He then formally bestowed the dukedom of Bouillon

on Godfrey Maurice of la Tour d'Auvergne, thereby for ever freeing it from the sovereignty of the warlike Bishops of Liège."

As we stood looking at the castle, we could only marvel that it had ever been taken, it looks so impregnable. Some of it is scooped out of the solid rock on which the rest is built. We climbed up to the topmost battlements, and had a grand view of the Semois winding its way through the country around. But the other hills round Bouillon are so lofty, and the valley in which it lies is so steep and narrow, that one cannot see very far away on all sides, When we came down from the battlements our guide led us into a very gloomy place, where she said prisoners used to be tried and condemned; and she led the way from this, up some broken steps, into a still darker vault. She knelt down here, and raised her lantern, and we saw a large square iron grating in the rocky flooring. Lighting a large piece of paper, she thrust it through these bars, and we saw it fall some distance into what seemed to be a wet cave in the bowels of the rock. "It is the oubliette," she said; "they were let down from here in a basket, and the basket was pulled up again."

It all seemed horribly real as the paper burned out,

and darkness hid the ghastly grave from sight. The dripping walls, their stern thickness, the darkness everywhere, seemed to bring one in close sympathy with the miserable victims who have perished here.

We came out, and were glad to find that the day had cleared into sunshine—doubly cheering after the gloomy horrors of the old fortress. Our guide was full of talk, though she had little to say about the great Crusader,

> "Godefroi de Bouillon ainsi nommé,
> Parcequ'il était le capitaine le plus consommé,"

as the punning French song says. She was far more anxious to tell us modern facts about the arrival and departure of Napoleon III. after the battle of Sedan.

"I saw him arrive and go away," she said. "All the town turned out to see him leave the hotel; and he cried, the Emperor did. I was close to the carriage, and I saw him cry."

She said that numbers of the wounded soldiers were brought to the barracks within the castle to be nursed. "I and my sister helped to nurse them, but there were hundreds of them." We learned afterwards that 6000 wounded men were brought to Bouillon, and that between that town and Sedan the difficulty was to find grave-diggers for the dead.

What a terrible journey the poor wounded fellows must have had along that jolting road we had travelled. There is a beautiful view of the castle on the right of the esplanade. One sees how steeply it rises from the lofty wooded rock, which goes-sheer down to the Semois on the side of the narrow promontory farthest from the town. The endless curves of the valley of this charming river make it impossible to explore it thoroughly in a carriage, for the hills which cause these curves rise so steeply from the river-side that the road often leaves it at some distance.

COTTAGE DOOR, BOUILLON.

We had passed the church on our way to the château; but it was under repair, and blocked up in

front with heaps of stone. It did not look specially interesting. The women of Bouillon do not wear caps, and this gives them a squalid aspect, their rough and seemingly uncombed heads help even the younger women to look untidy slovens; while the older women are repulsive and dirty-looking. Some of these, however, tie a coloured handkerchief round the head, fastened in a knot behind, and this sets off the wrinkled brown faces, and at once makes them picturesque.

We saw an old woman sitting at her cottage door, while a tall gipsy-looking gossip stood near, sweeping-broom in hand, wholly unconscious of the picturesqueness of her attitude. From the window of the inn we got a grand view of the old castle on the rock opposite, with the town below, and the river and quaint old bridge in the foreground. There is much scope for an artist at Bouillon ; but I advise all who may visit this picturesque and interesting town to choose dry weather for their stay, and also to write for double-bedded rooms to the Hôtel des Postes some days in advance, as most of the single rooms are too small. We also found it better to order separate meals, instead of joining the table d'hôte repasts.

The people looked quite different from those we had left at Dinant. Bouillon is really in Luxembourg,

and the natives of the Semois Valley are called Gammais by neighbouring country people. The villages beside the Semois looked more squalid and dirty than any we saw.

Very soon after leaving Bouillon, going north and east, we found the slaty country, "pays schisteux," the distinctive feature of the Ardennes.

Our landlady promised to furnish us with a comfortable carriage and two good horses, and next morning we went an expedition down the Semois to Alle.

It was a lovely day, full of brilliant sunshine, and as we drove up the steep hill from Bouillon, we saw women resting beside the road in the shade of the huge bundles of fern they carried on their backs. Wherever we went in the Ardennes, the women and girls seemed to be busy cutting bundles of fern and broom on the hill-sides, to make beds and fodder for their cows and goats.

We looked back at the top of the last hill, and saw through a wood of gleaming-stemmed birch-trees on each side of the road the exquisite far-stretching purple hills beyond Bouillon—the sun touching and bringing into full relief the green meadows lower down. Every now and then we met long cumbrous

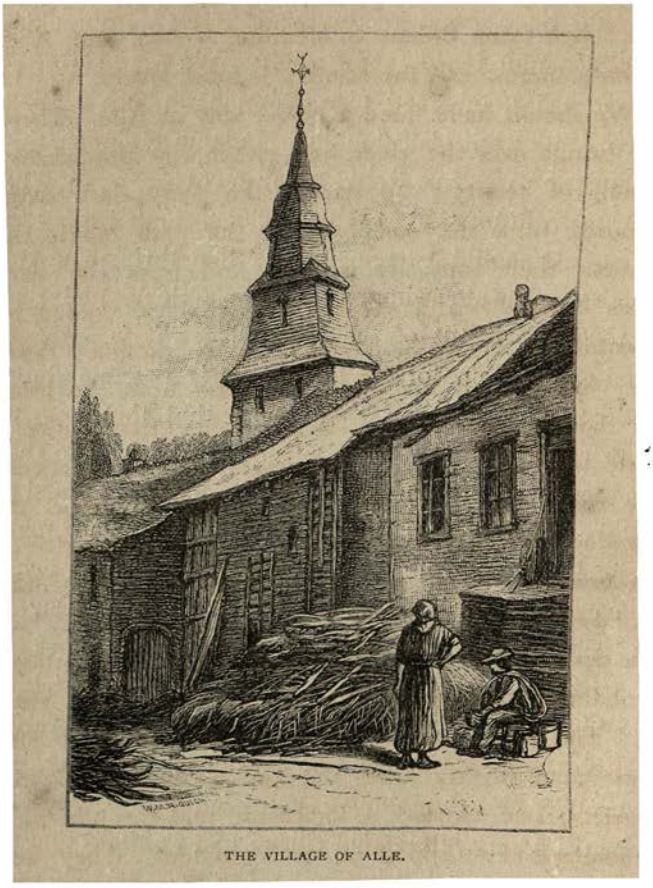
carts and waggons, drawn by huge oxen, with mild eyes and pleasant faces. Throughout the Ardennes the inhabitants are free to help themselves to fuel from the vast forests and wooded hills; and their chief occupation seems to be the cutting and carrying of faggots.

About half-way from Bouillon we passed through a quaint and original village called Corbion, placed on the top of a hill; we drove with some difficulty through the cumbered street, for in front of almost every house was either a large square dung-heap, or a stack of faggots, or else wood scattered widely about in process of being cut up; certainly Corbion would not be a pleasant place to stay in.

As we descend the steep hills from Corbion, all at once, at some distance before us, in the space between two hills that cross one another, we see a very pretty picture—Alle with its small white houses clustered round the church, beside the shining Semois. The road circles so round, and among the hills, that we soon lose sight of Alle, but we reach it after a while, and drive up to the door of its homely inn. The village looks bright, and is charmingly placed near the river, and the inn seems clean and comfortable. It is called Hotel Hoffman, and we thought

A VILLAGE IN THE ARDENNES.

it would be a good resting-place if we were making a walking tour beside the Semois. We were surprised to see such good-sized, airy bedrooms in such a small place. Stout, pleasant-looking, Madame Hoffman, said the pension was five francs a day *tout compris*, for bed, breakfast, dinner at twelve o'clock, and supper at seven. It should be remembered that throughout this country the dinner-hour is twelve o'clock, and that, in these small out-of-the-way villages, it is safest to keep to the hours of the hotel, as it is possible else to find an empty larder. We found that there was no chance of getting a carriage of any kind at Alle, so that, for those who prefer not to walk, the best way would be to take a carriage for a few days from Bouillon, and make excursions from Alle. At Membre, a few miles below Alle on the opposite bank, the Semois is specially lovely, and thence to Bohan, where hills, with dark gorges between them, green valleys, and the silver Semois taking its winding way through all, make constant and varied beauty—there is one charming valley where the stream foams over stones, making a succession of little cascades. Bohan is a very interesting village, and we heard that we could sleep there; but it seems much more homely than Alle. In making a walking tour from Dinant, the best way would be to begin at Gedinne, as has been already



THE VILLAGE OF ALLE.

said, sending on luggage to either Bouillon or Florenville; then from Gedinne to Bohan is a rather long

walk; but from Bohan to Membre, Vresse, and Alle, are easy stages, and the scenery is most lovely.

We should have liked a longer stay at Alle. There is a bridge over the river, and either way the scenery is full of beauty; up stream the lofty dark slate-coloured hills rise steeply from the path beside the Semois, their tops are wooded, and from the slaty sides lower down, a clear spring trickles, shaded by wreathing arms of honeysuckle and bramble; down the river, though the great hills rise from the brink on the side next Alle, on the other they retire a little way inland, leaving a pleasant meadow between the road and the river; between the road and the meadow we found a sort of tangled way, rich in flowers and blackberries, so still and solitary that plainly the people of Alle seldom come so far. At the bend of this beautiful river we saw a few cottages, probably another village, but we had not time to reach it. The clear water looked full of fish; and presently there came briskly along the road a couple of Belgian tourists; one carried a knapsack, and the other had a fishing-rod strapped on his shoulders. They were evidently going to walk to Bouillon by the lovely road that leads first beside a slate quarry, then up to the village of Rochehaut on the top of the slaty

cliff; but before reaching Rochehaut there is a point where several roads meet, the middle turning leads to the village.

After Rochehaut keep straight on along the road which goes downwards through a birch wood to a steep path leading into a glen on the right, through which runs a brook. At the bottom of the glen, cross the little bridge over the brook, and take a path on the right, which turns to the left, and follows the course of the Semois. Be careful not to take the other road which you will see before you. There is yet another valley with its brook to be crossed, and taking a turning to the right we are close to Botassart.

There is a highroad from Botassart to Bouillon, but it is infinitely longer and far less interesting than this, and there are landmarks which make the way across country easy to follow. One has to go past the church down to a mill below it, and leaving the mill on the left to follow the course of the brook till one reaches a little bridge; there is one more hill to be climbed, and then across fields is the road into Bouillon. It is also possible to keep beside the Semois, but its windings make this journey a long one. Still the left bank of the river from Alle to

Bouillon, that is to say by Rochehaut and Botassart, is far more beautiful than the carriage-way on the right by Corbion.

We much wished to have gone slowly up the Semois to Florenville, but we found out too late that this part of the river is also best accomplished in a walking journey, for the highroad to Florenville traverses the grand forest of Bouillon, and one sees little of the river. The way we chose, by Bertrix and Herbeumont, although very charming in some places, is too direct to show all that there is to be seen beside the Semois.

The best way, then, for the walking traveller, on his way up the Semois, is to send on his luggage by the diligence, which leaves Bouillon daily for Florenville at seven o'clock, and then to go to Auby by way of Dohan; there is another road by Les Hayons, but this misses a picturesque part of the river. Between Auby and the next village, Cugnon, is the grotto of St. Remacle, the apostle of the Ardennes; it stands nearly on the top of a hill, but it is now choked with rubbish. There was formerly at Cugnon one of the most ancient monasteries of Luxembourg, founded by Sigebert, and of which St. Remacle was the first abbot, but no trace of it remains, though in a wood near Cugnon

are some ruins either of a monastery or a castle. It is said that St. Remacle hewed the grotto called by his name out of the solid rock.

LEGEND OF ST. REMACLIUS.

In his time the Ardennes was a wild forest, there were few villages and no roads, and the country was ravaged by wolves and robbers. Pagans dwelt in the valley of the Semois, who murdered poor travellers as they went from one village to another—or made a journey to pray at one of the hermitages in the forest. It was for this reason that Sigebert, King of France, having heard of the sanctity of St. Remacle, wished to benefit the poor people of the Ardennes by giving them a saint among them, and he therefore permitted St. Remacle to build this monastery of Cugnon, and endowed it with three leagues of land between Auby and Herbeumont. As soon as the monastery was finished, the people built cottages round it, and took heart against the bandits of the forest. As to the wolves, they never minded them much, and would say to them as they say now,—

"Master Wolf, this is my road and that is thine—keep out of my way or there will be a row."

The monks led a busy life, fearing and serving God—cultivating the land, clearing the forest, digging roads, and loving and succouring the poor and sick; but the devil was so angry at the change that had come over the people, that he pursued these poor monks night and day with temptations.

St. Remacle lived thus a still harder life, so as to draw down a greater blessing on his little flock.

Now opposite Cugnon there is, as you know, a high hill, and half-way up this is a big rock leaning over the river. All round this rock was so wild a thicket, so filled with brambles and briers, that even the wolves could not dwell therein—it was given up to foxes, badgers, and other unclean beasts. Here, where no one dared to venture in broad daylight, the saint resolved to dig a grotto, with room for an altar and a mat in front of it, on which he could sleep every night and see Paradise in his dreams.

Alone, with the help of his pickaxe, the saint made his grotto, and enlarged a cleft looking out over the valley of the Semois, nearly two hundred feet below; then having ended his labour, he prayed God to bless the work of his hands.

He used to spend a fortnight at a time in this retreat, and in a hole in the rock beside his cell he

made a stable for the ass which carried his provisions uphill from the monastery. This ass was a patient and willing beast, and could go to and fro without guidance, but he had a way of looking about him, and being distracted by anything he saw. Sometimes a ripe bunch of nuts would entice him into the thicket, and more than once he had nearly lost his footing by stretching after an inviting thistle on the rocks. The Prior of the monastery had noticed these idle ways, and as he loved Jack, he would say when he had filled his panniers with provisions for the saint,—

"Take care of the wolves, my good Jack."

But Jack only put back his long ears, and thought the good Prior an old fidget.

One evening as he was toiling slowly up the hill, an enormous wolf came out of the thicket and glared at Jack with red and fiery eyes. Jack was frightened, he had never seen such a monster before, and his fear stupefied him. Just as he had recovered, and had stiffened his ears, and stretched his nostrils ready to cry out for help, the wolf, which quite understood these symptoms, sprang at poor Jack's throat and strangled him.

All at once St. Remacle came along the path to meet his faithful servant—he saw his poor ass, and

he recognised Satan in the wolf's skin. "Ah, foul deceiver," he said, "hast thou slain my faithful servant?" then suddenly flinging his rosary round the wolf's neck he held him fast. "From henceforth," he said, "thou shalt serve me and take the place of the ass."

There was no use in struggling, Satan was fairly conquered, and St. Remacle, leading him to his rocky stable, fastened him up there for the night, and returned to his cell.

In the middle of the night, when all slept, St. Remacle was suddenly awakened: trees cracked and moaned as if the black chase of All Souls' night were among them; hoarse voices croaked and blasphemed. St. Remacle looked out of his loophole, and a wonderful sight he saw: around the grotto there were toads wearing crimson caps, a sign that they had been baptized by witches; death's heads perched on long claws crawled painfully on the rough ground; bats with human heads; vampires with pale faces and blood-stained lips; naked witches on their broomsticks on their way to the black mass, hideous demons which fled away into the thicket and then returned to perch on the crags above the stable of Master Wolf, and peered down at him, fastened up by the saint's rosary like any common yard-dog.

"Rouse yourself, master," they cried ; "it is the black Sabbath ; you will be waited for at the revels."

But the Evil One hung his head, and crunched his teeth in helpless rage.

Then there rose up a din such as mortal ears had never heard, a chorus of shrieks and howls, from which soon there were hurled forth fearful imprecations and blasphemies. The very rock seemed to shake in horror, and a noise like thunder rolled among the hills. St. Remacle armed himself with the brush with which he sprinkled holy water, and opened the door of his cell.

There was a howl and a shout ; the fiends thronged in hissing and yelling: "How dare you spoil our Sabbath?" they cried; "the black buck will be wanting at our feast ; there will be no one to perform the rites ;" and their awful forms rose up from the river, towering in the darkness as high as the hills themselves, as they sternly bade the saint set their Master free.

But St. Remacle raised his arm and laid his brush so heartily on the shoulders of all around him, that the demons fled away howling with fear and pain, for the holy water burnt them as if it had been molten lead.

Then the saint went back into his cell, and after offering up a thanksgiving before the altar, lay down on the mat at its foot, and slept as if nothing had happened.

Next morning he put the ass's panniers on his prisoner, and led the wolf by the rosary down to the monastery; the village people he met shrank away in terror when they saw so big a beast, and wondered why the saint should choose such an evil companion as a wolf.

"You have indeed cause to shrink from him," said St. Remacle, "but not for the reason you think. This is a much worse foe than a wolf—it is Satan."

Then the villagers understood that the saint had conquered the Devil, and there was great rejoicing through the country. For two years the wolf did the ass's work well and faithfully, so strong a power over him had the rosary still tightly fastened round his neck. He carried the saint's provisions to and fro, and went with St. Remacle to visit the poor—his panniers laden with good things for their needs. Meantime the monks had peace in their monastery, and there was peace throughout the forest.

"Methinks," said St. Remacle, "the wolf is helping in so many good works that he is beginning to atone for his wickedness."

One day, however, as the wolf was coming up the rock with heavily-laden panniers, either the string of the rosary broke or it was gnawed by one of those

little red mice of which witches are so fond, and first one bead and then another rolled to the ground. It was enough—Satan made a mighty effort, and vanished into the thicket, with a howl of derision. When St. Remacle reached the spot, he found the panniers lying beside an empty wolf's skin, which smelt so horribly of sulphur that the saint, having first sprinkled it with holy water, nailed it on to the door of his cell, lest some other evil spirit should enter it and thus become a means of torment to the villagers.

The next village to the cave of St. Remacle is Mortehan, where there is a little inn. The road between Mortehan and Bertrix is very picturesque. We left Bouillon in a break soon after seven, but the road is so hilly that we did not reach Bertrix till nearly twelve, and had a downpour of rain all the way. Bertrix did not look attractive, though the people seemed well clothed and fed; but the drive between Bertrix and Herbeumont was very interesting. First we drove through a long valley, the wooded hills grassed, as they reached the road; a little stream ran along beside us, and soon we saw a huge wheel, which was turned by a murmuring brook; the sides of the hills became bare and black, and huge rents showed in them. After this we saw

piles of slate, and soon came to a black village, the houses being built entirely of blocks of slate, beneath the steep falaises which on both sides of the road are worked as quarries. These are the famous ardoisières of Herbeumont, which are said to have existed ever since the time of the Romans. We felt that the constant downpour of rain injured the effect of this valley, which in light and shade must be very picturesque.

Herbeumont is a small village, charmingly placed beside the Semois, with a ruined castle on the hill above. It is a favourite summer retreat, and we found the salle-à-manger nearly full. There were several groups of fathers and mothers and children, evidently come to spend the holidays beside the Semois. The hotel looked so clean and comfortable, that when we reached Florenville a few hours later, we were sorry we had not stayed at Herbeumont. There are twenty-five beds in the hotel, and the pension is six francs a day. The owner has placed bathing cabins beside the river. The rain prevented us from exploring the château, which we were sorry for, as we heard that from the hill on which the ruins stand there is a grand view of the windings of the Semois. The company at the table d'hôte seemed very cheerful. One middle-aged, pompous-looking man amused us greatly;

the practice of dining at mid-day seemed to annoy him, and he evidently wished to convert the whole table to his views.

"Take the whole day," he said, rolling out his words as if he were flinging them round the table. "Take the day for either walking or excursions, as suits you best; then,"—he waved his hand,—"dine at six. Let the dinner be as long as it will. Dinner,"—he looked round, to see if we were all listening, and I fear he saw a smile, for he frowned at me severely,—"dinner," he said emphatically, "is not merely intended to satisfy appetite—let it be at the same time a means of enjoyment. Let conversation be of the lightest kind—no discussions, nothing likely to disturb digestion; and then,"—he beamed round on his deeply attentive audience, and stretched out both his open hands—"then, when dinner is done, the day is finished—go to bed, and sleep."

Soon after leaving Herbeumont we descended a picturesque winding road, and passed the valley of Conques, in which are the ruins of a priory of the Monks of Orval. We got several charming views of the Semois before we reached Florenville; but, although we enjoyed our journey, we wished that we had gone direct from Bouillon to St. Hubert, as this part of the Semois is

so imperfectly seen while driving. However, we had a bright day, spite of the rain, for our companions sang very sweetly; and one of them recited "The Jackdaw of Rheims" with excellent effect.

The neighbourhood of Florenville is, however, very charming. Chiny should certainly be visited, as well as Izel; and, above all, the Abbey d'Orval, about a two miles' walk through the forest. This was once a very large monastery, founded in the tenth century by some Calabrian monks, who brought to the Countess de Chiny the body of her husband from the Holy Land. The monastery was visited a century later by Matilda, the widow of Godefroi le Bossu, Duke of Bouillon. The legend says that at the entrance the Duchess washed her hands in the fountain of the Abbey, and lost her wedding ring therein, this ring being miraculously restored to her—a fish is said to have brought it in its mouth—she thereupon richly endowed the community, and named the valley Vallée d'Or, in memory of her ring. Hence the name of the monastery d'Orval. There have been two Abbeys here, as the ruins clearly show. The once beautiful church dedicated to Saint Bernard has entirely disappeared. There has been a violence of destruction in these grand ruins which tells its own story. That far-

stretching anarchy, the French Revolution of 1793, has to answer for this vandalism. A part of the huge army sent against the Austrians battered and burned the buildings; and finally cannonaded what remained of the once splendid Abbaye d'Orval.

CHAPTER IX

"IN ARDEN."

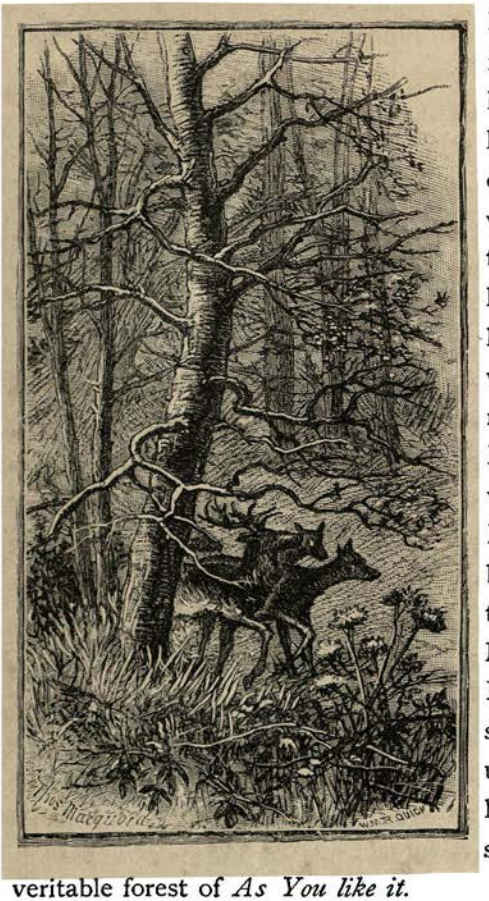
"They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him, and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England, and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the Golden World."—*As You like it.*

WHEN the illustrious Micawber of never-to-be-forgotten memory thought of turning his attention to coals, "he," says his wife, "very properly said the first step to be taken clearly was to come and see the Medway."

I suppose that, in like manner, because we were bent on visiting the forest of Arden (in the Belgian Ardennes), part of which is now called "La Chasse de Saint Hubert," the first step seemed to be to go and see the town of St. Hubert, though there is actually nothing to see there, except the huge church which commemorates the saintly legend.

We had planned this journey for many years past. We had turned a deaf ear to the suggestion that "a forest of Arden exists in Warwickshire, and was doubtless the scene of *As You like it.*" We knew that the

country called the Ardennes was still a huge forest, cleared here and there for cities and villages among its lofty hills, while charming rivers wind through the wooded valleys, and we knew that this vast forest reaches from Liège southwards to the French frontier, but we also knew that between Marche and La Roche lies a special extent of unbroken forest land, which is said to be the veritable forest of *As You like it.*



For years, then, we had dreamed of this journey,

and now we were really going to take our long-planned excursion through the forest of Arden. We had come by railway from Florenville and then by omnibus from Poix to St. Hubert, a pleasant drive of an hour or so. The road out of Poix is picturesque, bordered by high rocks jutting out roughly here and there; but this soon ends, and we come to open country, our way shaded by an avenue of ash-trees and sycamores, with the little river Lomme murmuring through a flower-pied meadow on the right, while all around us lies the forest. The sparkling little river dashes and foams over gray stones that lie in its course, till at one point it gets so pent in and angry that it rushes madly over some rocks in a tiny waterfall.

Very soon we see the houses of St. Hubert among the poplar trees ahead of us. "Voilà l'abbaye," says our driver; and, rising above the trees on the right, we see the square, black-capped towers of the abbey church.

As we clattered up the hill to the Place in front of the church we were quite surprised to see so grand a building in such an out-of-the-way little town. Pilgrimages are made to St. Hubert, and miraculous cures worked by the wondrous stole of the saint, especially in cases of hydrophobia. But we were very hungry and tired, and the inn looked invitingly clean and

pleasant, so we determined to dine before we visited the shrine of St. Hubert.

It was curious to see how the saint has given a character to the place; in the entrance of the hotel there were hat-pegs made in imitation of a deer's foot; the handle of the bell-rope was also a deer's foot, and antlers abounded. It would be in keeping if the inn had a supply of venison steaks for the benefit of hungry travellers. However, we got an excellent dinner, ending with *jambon des Ardennes*, doubtless made from a wild boar killed in our forest of Arden. At least, we told each other this, and found the flavour of the ham very good. While we digested our meal we turned to our books for information respecting La Chasse de St. Hubert.

In the time of the famous saint the forest stretched away westward as far as the Meuse. St. Hubert seems to have been a rich noble of the court of King Pepin, so greatly addicted to hunting that he neglected all besides. It happened that he was hunting one Good Friday in the forest, when all at once he saw a fine stag bearing between its horns a golden crucifix. For an instant Hubert paused, struck with wonder at the strange vision, then, believing it to be some delusion, he urged his horse towards the stag; but, instead of turn-

ing to fly, the animal stood confronting him with mild, imploring eyes, and a voice sounded in the huntsman's ears, "Hubert, Hubert! how long will this idle passion for the chase tempt you to forget your salvation?"

Conscience-stricken, Hubert dismounted, and, falling on his face, he cried out, "Lord, what shall I do?—I am ready." The voice answered, "Go to Maestricht to seek out my servant Lambert. He will tell you what to do." And then the stag disappeared as suddenly as it had come.

Hubert went to St. Lambert and then made his profession in the Monastery of Stavelot; some years after he went to Rome. St. Lambert had meanwhile suffered martyrdom in the valley of the Légie, and the Pope appointed Hubert his successor as Bishop of Tongres. During his consecration an angel is said to have brought to Hubert the famous stole, which is reported not only to cure hydrophobia but to have the power of rendering the bite of a mad dog harmless in those who have touched the relic.

A church had been founded in the forest by St. Maternus as early as the year 102 on the site of the present Abbey of St. Hubert; a fortress was built near it called Ombra. However, Attila the Destroyer passed that way, and the place once more became a thorny wilderness.

It happened that towards the end of the seventh century, a few years after Hubert's conversion, Plectruda, the wife of King Pepin, was journeying through the forest of the Ardennes, perhaps on her way to see the hermit of Celles St. Hadelin, when she and her cavalcade stopped to rest in a marshy lonely region. After taking some refreshments her attendants all fell asleep, while Plectruda, who seems to have been a "notable" princess, looked after the horses and prevented them from straying. Looking about her, she saw among the reeds in the marsh a fragment of old wall, the remains of the church destroyed by Attila. Plectruda had never heard of this church, and she sat down wondering whence these stones came. All at once, says the legend, there fell at her feet a tablet, on which was written, in letters of gold, "This place is chosen by God for the saving of many souls; it is holy ground worthy of Him, honoured and predestined as the hermitage of the servants of God. It will increase and have powerful protection, but it will also suffer many tribulations. May he who shall trouble this place wither at his root, so that his branches yield no fruit, or may he suffer the pains of Divine vengeance." Plectruda, on her return, informed her husband of the miraculous event. The king caused a

monastery to be built next year on the spot, and, placing it under the care of St. Berengius, he called it Andage, from the number of springs found there.

St. Hubert had been a friend of St. Berengius while they were both at the court, and he often visited him in his Monastery of Andage.

When St. Hubert died, after a thirty-years' episcopate, he was buried at Liège, but the monks at Andage had no peace till they had obtained permission to transport his body to their monastery. The reigning emperor, Louis le Débonair, accompanied the procession that bore the saint's body as far as the Meuse, and the name of the monastery from that period was changed from Andage to St. Hubert.

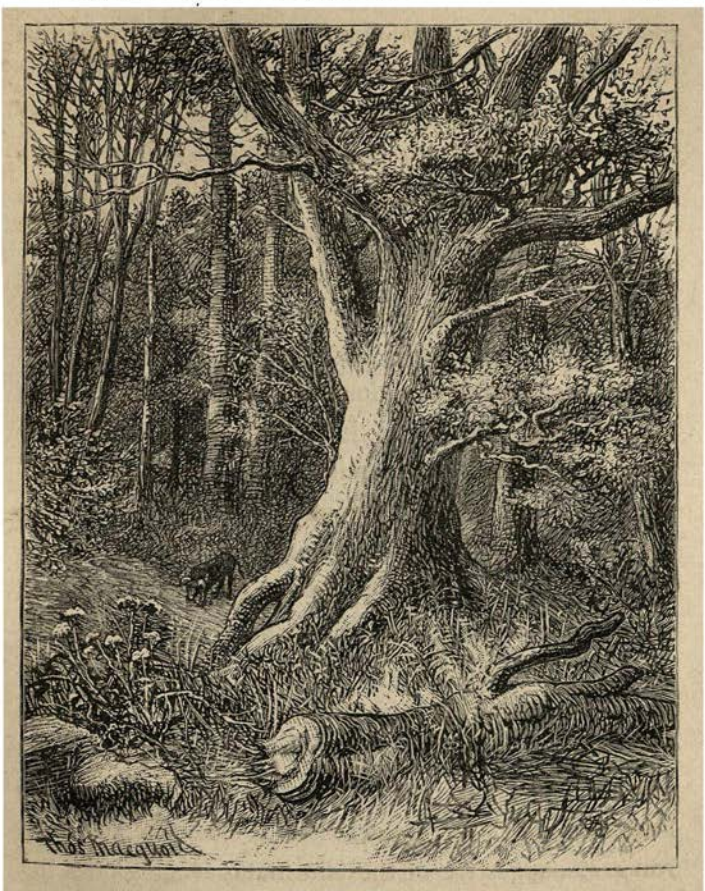
The bell was ringing for vespers as we crossed the Place between the inn and the church. At the top of the great building, between the two towers, is a large figure of St. Hubert kneeling before the miraculous stag. A woman and a girl at a stall in front of the flight of steps leading up to the church were selling rosaries, medals, and the usual accessories of a celebrated saint.

"Monsieur," the woman said as we stopped beside her stall, "Monsieur and Madame will surely buy some medals. They have but to wait in church till the end of the office, and then the priest will bless them, and

then Monsieur and Madame will be for ever secure from the bite of a mad dog."

We bought some pretty little medals, representing the legend of St. Hubert, and then we went into church. It is a grand but uninteresting building in late Gothic. However the music was beautiful—better than in any of the cathedrals we had visited—the voices were good, and the whole service was reverent, though the church looked much too large for its congregation. When the service was ended we went to look at the shrine of St. Hubert, a splendid monument by Geefs, erected by the late King Leopold; the carved stone-work is marvellously fine. While we were admiring it, a tall, dignified-looking priest, who we fancied had been keeping an eye on us during the service, came up and asked us if we had any medals or anything we wished to be blessed. We thanked him, but we did not show him our medals. There is absolutely nothing to see in the hilly little town of St. Hubert, but the memory of the saint is kept green, after a lapse of one thousand two hundred years, by innumerable articles in the shop windows suggestive of the miraculous stag.

The carriage we had ordered to take us through the forest looked comfortable when it appeared at the hotel door, and the horse, a stout little Ardennais, seemed



THE FOREST OF ARDEN.

in good condition; the driver was an Ardennais also, brown-faced, and full of talk; and we started off at a

good pace; but our speed only lasted for ten minutes. Then, as we went slowly up what our driver evidently considered a steep hill, the little horse shied, and then bolted across the road, as if he meant to turn back to St. Hubert. Our driver jumped off his seat at this, pulled the animal into the middle of the road, gave him the whip, and turned round to us with a grin on his broad brown face.

"See now, Madame," he said, "you must, if you please, excuse the behaviour of my little horse; he is so accustomed to make journeys with *messieurs les commis-voyageurs* that he has fallen into their bad habits; he insists upon stopping at every pothouse he sees. Ah! but he is an original beast. I forced him but now to pass a pothouse, as you see; and he makes a grimace to pass the pothouse; it is not good behaviour to a lady, *mais enfin*"—and he grinned again, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Pothouses" seem to abound near St. Hubert. As we went slowly up-hill the horse stopped at least half-a-dozen times, and our driver not only dismounted at every stoppage, but, doubtless in order to soothe the animal's feelings, he drank a glass of beer at every stoppage, and grew more and more cheerfully communicative.

"Ah!" he said, "my horse is well known in this country; every one knows him. His name is Rocquet, and when we reach La Roche you will see the people come out of their houses, and they will say, 'Good day, Rocquet; how is it with you, Rocquet?'"

While he talked we have been looking ahead; in the distance the forest is appearing on all sides.

"Yonder, Madame," says our driver, pointing on the left, "is the Chasse of St. Hubert."

We are now driving over a sort of wild—"the skirts of the wild wood"—covered with broom and bracken. On one side is a far-reaching extent of firs and copse-wood, while before us, on the other side, rises a mass of seemingly boundless forest, which our driver tells us "covers four thousand one hundred and ten hectares of land." It stretches away on the left to the forest of Bande, where the scenery is wilder and more romantic. "Much game," he says, "is killed in the Chasse St. Hubert, besides stags, wild boars, and wolves, but the season has not yet begun; we are still in August."

We asked if wild boars were plentiful in the forest; the question seemed to excite him. He turned round eagerly, and left Rocquet to follow his devices.

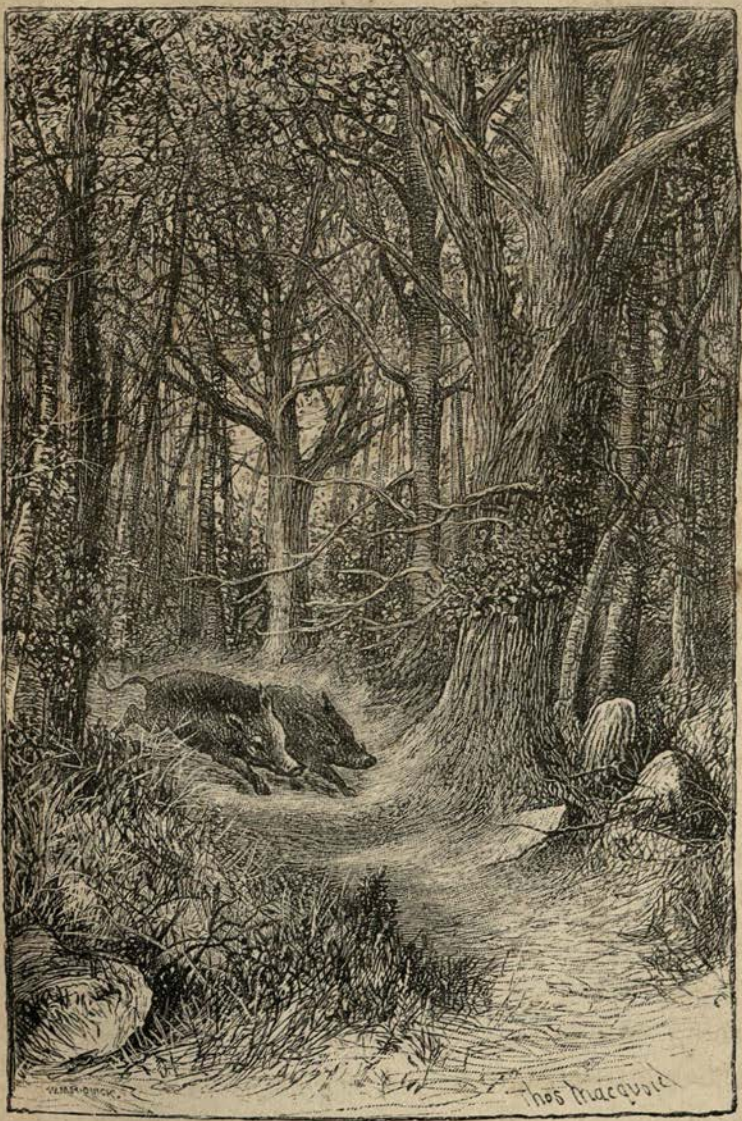
"I should think they are, Madame; and it is easy

enough to get permission to hunt them at any time. Only a fortnight ago my brother killed two in the forest there,"—he pointed with his whip towards the trees on our left,—"and one of them, Madame, was as big as Rocquet."

We asked him about wolves.

"Wolves, *mon Dieu!* they are hard to find except in winter, when they sometimes come into the town at nightfall, when the weather is very severe. As to the boars, that is quite another affair; they increase so fast that we are thankful to get them killed."

Now we cross a small road, and enter the forest itself, "famous Ardeyna," as Spenser calls it in "Astrophel." "Well," says Rosalind, "this is the forest of Arden;" and the fool answers her with a groan of fatigue, "Ay, now am I in Arden." On our right we hear the murmur of a tiny stream overhung with brambles—"the briers of this working-day world"—and ferns, and rushes. On each side of us tall beeches rise up from the grassy edge of the road, their satin-like trunks doubtless far more slender than of yore, relieved by the dreamy green light of glades reaching far into the depths of the forest. Before us is a long interminable stretch of white road, now rising, now falling, but ever going on straight between its



WILD BOARS "IN ARDEN."

borders of lofty trees. The murmuring little brook that runs beside us recalls Celia's directions to Oliver—

> "Down by the neighbour bottom
> The rank of osiers by the murmuring stream."

Was it beside such a brook that the melancholy Jaques reposed, watching the stag "augmenting it with tears"?

"Do osiers grow in the forest?" I ask our driver. He turns round and looks at me hard. He could understand that we felt an interest in *la chasse*, but this curiosity about osiers evidently puzzles him.

"Yes, Madame," he says carelessly, "oh yes, there are osiers. The basket-makers come to supply themselves in the forest, but the osiers are far away from here, in the marshes yonder,"—he points among the trees on the left of the road,—"the trees are larger before you come to the marshes."

Still we doubted whether, as in Shakespeare's time, any "old oak, whose boughs were mossed with age and high top bald with dry antiquity," stood in the very depths of this forest of to-day. Of necessity the forest has greatly changed since the time of St. Hubert, and many a noble tree has fallen before the woodman's axe.

When Shakespeare wrote there were probably only a few cottages near the Abbey of St. Hubert, and the peasants would not have come so far afield to cut wood as they do now.

Soon we came to a whitewashed cottage beside the road; too near the road for Rosalind's home in the wood. There is a shed on one side and a barn on the other; opposite it still runs the tiny brook, completely overhung with brake and bramble, but there are no "olive-trees," and we saw neither sheep nor "sheep-cote." The forest is very dense hereabouts; the green glades afford no space for the sylvan banquet of the Duke and his friends, so roughly broken in upon by Orlando, just before Jaques delivered his sermon on the seven ages of man.

We now left the carriage, and strolled into the deep, olive-green glades. As we advance we find that the trees are larger; the evening sunlight comes through the lower branches, making sometimes golden, sometimes crimson patches on the leaves and trunks, and on the thickly-matted beech-mast that hides the tree roots. We wander on into the forest, which grows denser and more tangled as we advance, and we see it is already getting dark in the depths before us. We wonder if the wild boars are rousing in their lairs. We had brought

As You like it with us, and we read snatches now and then of the wondrous idyl. It seems to us, as we wander farther and farther among the trees, that we are in the very spot created for the loves of Orlando and Rosalind.

Presently we came to a group of larger trees with spaces of green light around them, where fairies might hold their court on the brown-red ground, or where the foresters of the banished Duke might have sung glees under the greenwood tree, and Amiens helped Jaques "to suck melancholy out of a song." Doubtless it was in such a spot as this, reposing on the ground strewn with brown acorn-cups, that the Duke, musing upon life, found "tongues in trees, books in the running brook, sermons in stones, and good in everything." But we saw no trace of Jaques's friends, the poor "dappled fools, the native burghers of this desert city." There was not even a rabbit or a squirrel. I confess the stories of the wild boars told by Rocquet's master had made me afraid to wander very deeply into the forest, delightful as it was, for if some terrible denizen of the place should all at once rise snorting from his feast of beech-mast and acorns in the long grass, we had no "boar-spear in our hand" like Rosalind.

As we linger the light lessens, the tender green has

changed to olive, and the pale beech-stems show like phantoms in the gloom. Unwillingly we turn upon our steps, and linger lovingly as we go.

"Monsieur, Madame," our driver cries from the road, "we must hasten if we will not be benighted before we get to La Roche."

So, though we long to dream a while longer in Arden, we stumble back through the trees, and once more life turns to prose.

After all, we felt it was fitting that the Duke, his daughter and niece, and the rest, should go back to the world. Those still, sombre glades were fitter haunts for the peevish Phœbe and her humble, devoted lover, who knew nought of the world, or for my lord Jaques and old Adam, who had had enough of it, than for clever-tongued Rosalind, for the inimitable fool, or for the gay company of courtiers.

Our driver was impatient to talk again. He told us the wild boars are hunted at night from the marshes, where they sleep. "The dogs drive them out towards the hunters," he said. "Ah! it is good sport; it is very exciting, but it is necessary too. Only a few days ago some of these animals destroyed a field of wheat and another of potatoes with their cursed snouts. They will destroy everything."

IN THE FOREST.

Presently we came to a deserted-looking farm-house.

"Do you see that?" said our driver. "Close by is the spot where, one thousand two hundred years ago, St. Hubert hunted one Good Friday, and was converted by the miraculous vision. It is called La Converserie."

But he said this as a matter of course, or rather of history, without any of the reverence a Breton would have shown in relating such an incident.

We were now about half-way on our journey to La Roche, when the road, which had been hitherto almost straight, emerged into a highroad running right and left, where there was a small refreshment house. We stopped for a short time at the little inn to get some milk, and for Rocquet to have some black bread and water.

When we start again we follow a road on the left; it is less wild, and is bordered by a close avenue of mountain-ash trees, now bright with large clusters of berries, some scarlet, some orange. When our driver saw that we admired them he made frantic efforts to cut off a bunch with his whip, slashing at them furiously as we drove along fast to La Roche. There was still light enough to show that the road became more and

more beautiful and varied, with lofty, dark hills on one side, and a deep, chasm-like valley on the other, whence we could hear the murmuring of a river. The road descends rapidly as it circles round and round these lofty hills.

There is more light here than there was in the forest; and now, at a rapid turn, we come in sight of a meeting of hills and valleys, some of the hills turning abruptly, as if they shouldered one another; others with a gap between, where delicate mist wreaths, repeated till they melt in indistinctness among the distant hills, hint at many wild gorges in this mountainous region. There is a lovely light over all, for, except in the deep valleys, the sun seems to be lingering till we reach La Roche.

"You are close to her all this time," our driver says, "but you cannot see her; she lies in a hole."

All at once we turn the corner of a hill, and there is the swift Ourthe winding round, and then curving out again, with the houses of La Roche built beside it, and the dark ruined castle, black as night, rising up from the rock on which it stands, in the middle of the town, frowning down, as it has done for centuries, over the meeting of valleys, in the centre of which stands the little town, the heart of the Ardennes.

CHAPTER X.

THE HEART OF THE ARDENNES.

IN the very heart and centre of the Western or Belgian Ardennes, the delightful little town of La Roche lies

as it were buried beside the river Ourthe, and forms a centre where some five romantic-looking valleys

converge, watered either by the Ourthe or by its numberless tributaries.

The air at La Roche seemed to us the purest and most bracing we had met with in our journeyings through this part of Belgium; and no wonder; for the very basin in which the town stands is on the highest level of the Ardennes plateau, so that the hills which surround it are relatively higher than any in the province.

The Ourthe, which circles La Roche like some huge silver serpent, finds its way under a bridge at either end of the town into valleys between dark rocky hills. These hills are abrupt and fantastic in shape, and in some of the valleys show cultivation; but close to the town this is chiefly confined to the plateaux on the top, the slaty sides being too loose and slippery to hold earth for agricultural purposes. The Ourthe and the other little murmuring streams wind so constantly, that these hills seem, whichever way one looks, to turn a bare or wooded shoulder from one another; although, spite of this abruptness, there are glimpses of dark gorges in the sides of the steep hills—the mouths of yet other valleys, out of which trickle tiny brooks; beyond are crossing ranges of hills, those farthest off purple or opal-tinted, according to the

hour of the day. Before we had spent an hour in La Roche we felt that no one can say it lies in "*un trou*," as our driver from St. Hubert had asserted.

The approach from the St. Hubert side is very remarkable, a winding road leading down, till the town suddenly bursts on the view.

The town has been too frequently destroyed by fire to have any great antiquity, but its irregularity makes it picturesque.

The chief inn belongs to three brothers, called les frères Meunier, who are quite an institution of La Roche. They are still fine tall men, and must have been a splendid-looking band of brothers. The eldest, about eighty, seems to be failing a little, and sits sunning himself in the morning on a bench opposite the inn. The two younger brothers—one about seventy the other some years younger—take a very active share in the work of the hotel. We entered through the kitchen, and found the two brothers seated at a table near the cooking-stove, deftly preparing vegetables for the early dinner, for at La Roche and throughout the Ardennes the dinner-hour is twelve o'clock. There were, at the time of our visit, four hundred visitors in the little town—holiday-seekers from Liège, Brussels, etc.—rather a beer-drinking, noisy crew—so that the

table d'hôte was always crowded; but every one seemed to be overflowing with happiness and enjoyment, and to be completely fascinated with the beauty of the country. The brothers Meunier were on the most friendly terms with all their guests—the youngest brother was especially agreeable; indeed, he was genial and kind to all, and seemed greatly pleased to be talked to by his lady-customers. There is a legend that not long ago this youngest brother wished to take a wife; but when he consulted his two elders on the subject, they shook their white heads.

"You are too young," they said, "far too young to marry; there is no hurry."

His disappointment does not seem to have affected his spirits; for whether he was making out bills, peeling and shredding cauliflowers with a rapid knife, or exhibiting a fine basket of fish just brought in from the river, he was always gay and pleasant, and making jokes to amuse his visitors.

Certainly, the bills at the Hôtel du Nord or Meunier are not puzzling to make out: there is a simple daily charge, and the brothers never keep accounts. They are such sober, honourable men, and so highly esteemed in La Roche, that their word is enough. The pension in this merry, easy-going place is four francs a day,

"*tout compris*," except service, and includes an abundant supply of good light beer. There is always plenty to eat; but the living is rough, and one would prefer to pay more and have better-cooked food. Still, the bread and eggs and fish and salad were excellent, and almost always there were fowls and good roast meat. But the time to visit La Roche is certainly either in the spring or in July or October; then the little town is not overcrowded, and one can get specially cooked for. It is fair to say that, even in the busiest time, if you ask Monsieur Meunier jeune for anything special at supper, you will get it without extra charge.

But the presence of visitors cannot destroy the particular charm of La Roche,—its wild freshness and unlikeness to anything one has seen before, and also the total absence of modern attempts at civilisation. The walks in the neighbourhood are delightful, but Monsieur Meunier told us we ought first to go and see the castle; so we went up the chief street in which our inn stands to the suspension-bridge. From this we got a good view of the position of the town, and of the swiftly-flowing Ourthe, crowned by the black ruins of the castle, on a huge rock which rises out of the town itself. A special feature of La Roche is that

the castle does not stand on the top of the hill, detached against the sky, but on the side of the rock, and this from one side gives a sort of mystery to the grim old ruin, for in the dark it is scarcely possible to make out the towers from the black rock behind them.

THE CASTLE FROM THE RIVER.

All round, on whichever side we look, a road takes its way along the sides of the encircling hills, and besides these roads, numerous narrow tracks lead down from the summits into the deep valleys.

There is a new as well as an old road to each of the neighbouring villages—towns are far away from

this primitive region. These roads, being cut on the sides of the slaty rock, are walled to a certain depth with dark stones loosely piled together, giving the effect of a circle of fortifications, as the sombre terraces rise one above another on the sides of the hills.

We had to wait on the bridge for the *concierge* to take us to the château; we felt rejoiced to see his daughter coming in place of him, for the real *concierge* is eighty years old, and, though a healthy veteran, goes but slowly, and it is a steep climb to the castle.

The daughter proved to be a very interesting woman, full of varied information. She told us her name was Hubertine La Hire.

We soon came to an opening beyond the bridge, and up this ran a steep sort of lane, with the black castle looking down on us like an eagle. Its massive keep and towers, and the thickness of the walls, show what a grand old fortress it has been. For greater security, the point on which the castle stands—so firmly embedded in the rock that it is hard to say where the construction begins—has been detached by means of a cleft from the main rock, and it was thus unassailable on any side, except by the steep climb up the loose slaty road.

These slaty roads are the only drawback to the plea-

sure of scrambling about La Roche, as they make climbing up toilsome, and coming down dangerous.

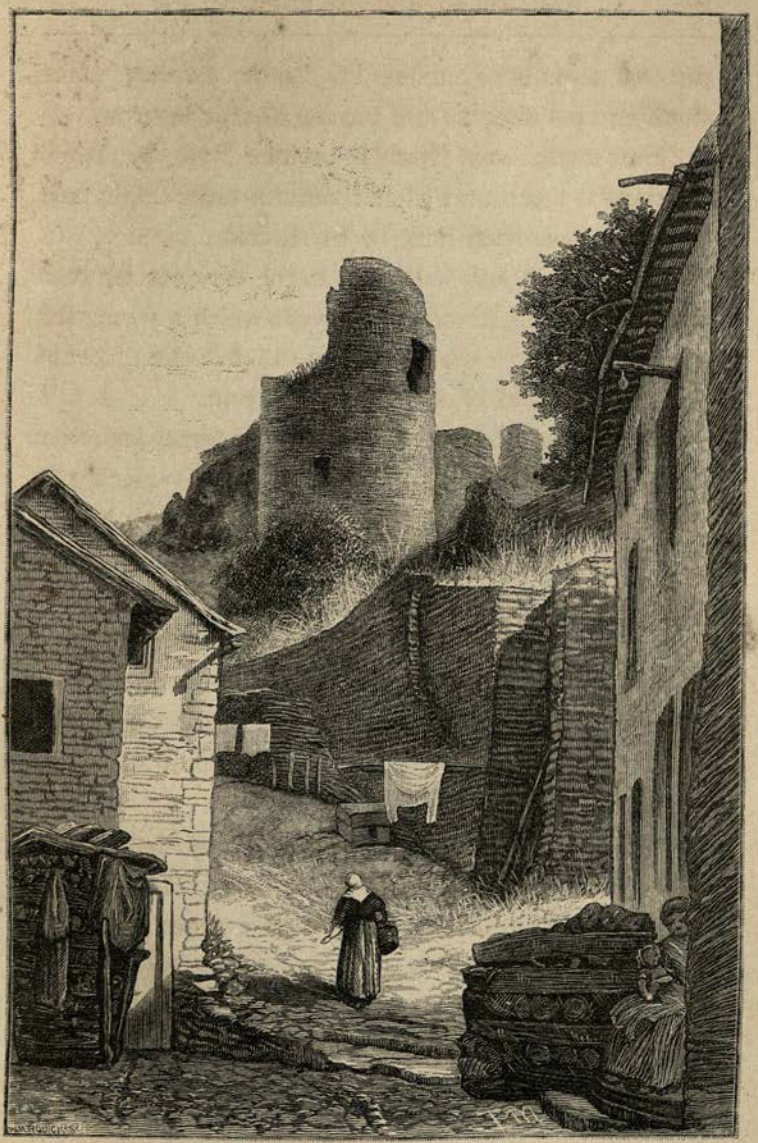
The castle was lived in at one time by Pepin d'Héristhal; but part of it claims an older origin, and is said to have been built by the Romans.

Our rugged path led us up to the entrance between two black round towers, just outside which a young fox was fastened by a chain to the wall; it looked like the enchanted warder of the gloomy old ruin.

The castle seems to have been very large, and, from being built on the side of the hill, there is much picturesque variety in the ruins. We had to climb broken flights of steps here and there to get to different sets of battlements, all commanding varying points of view. There has been a walled entrance-court within the first portal, and from this court the castle was entered by means of a wooden gallery; on the left was the garden, and close by a square tower, of which only the lower part remains.

There seems to have been a very large hall, and at the end of this is a little tower, in which was the chapel. On the left there has been another large hall or chamber.

In the seventeenth century the French destroyed this older part of the castle to make room for huge



THE WAY UP TO THE CASTLE OF LA ROCHE.

vaults or subterranean passages. These still exist, and the masonry seems strong enough to last for centuries. The French built barracks above these vaults, and excavated an enormous cistern; this last is perfect, and large enough to hold four hundred tuns. In some ways the ruins reminded us of those of Montaigle, near Dinant, especially in the charming luxuriance of wild climbing plants and flowers, flinging themselves round the arches of gloomy vaults which look as if they had served for prisons, and which chill one with the thought of what may have been suffered in them.

For the Counts of La Roche were a warlike race, and the castle saw more fighting than domestic life while they reigned there. There is a sad legend attached to it, but we are not told to which of the Counts of La Roche it belongs.

A Count Henri de la Roche—there were some six called Henri—being left a widower, was very sad. He had no son to inherit his countship, and only one fair daughter, aged eighteen, named Bertha.

One day Count Henri said to himself—"I am getting old, and I have no son. Bertha is but a child, and as soon as I am dead some of my fierce neighbours, or even the Bishop of Liège, will pounce down on the castle, and take her inheritance from

Bertha, and harry my vassals." I must tell you that, though La Roche has been the most important town in its own county, yet till the middle of the fourteenth century it was a poor little village, depending on its castle for protection and support. "There is only one way," said Count Henri ;. "Bertha must have a husband, and the sooner the better, for I feel my strength is leaving me."

Moreover, the Count determined that Bertha's husband should be a stalwart soldier, able to hold his own against all invaders.

So he issued a proclamation that in the month of June in that year the Count Henri de la Roche would hold a tournament or trial at arms of the young seigneurs of the province, and that he who came off conqueror should become the husband of the fair Bertha, and succeed to the inheritance of the Counts de la Roche.

This announcement caused much commotion among the young lords far and near, for the beauty of Bertha de la Roche was well known, and in the interval before the tournament there were many visitors at the castle.

Among these came Waleran, eldest son of the powerful Count of Montaigu, whose castle was not far distant from La Roche.

At first sight of the lovely Bertha, Waleran lost his heart to her, and when he spoke to the sweet maiden, his courtesy and handsome face so moved her that she listened to him more readily than to any one else. In brief, Waleran had not ridden many times to the castle of La Roche before he had drawn from Bertha a confession that she returned his love.

Now, this would have been all as it should be, for Waleran was almost peerless among the young knights of this time—as handsome and courtly as he was brave. But, alas! he had a fickle fancy, and he had already been a year betrothed to Marie, daughter of the Count de Salm, and was passionately beloved by her. Marie was beautiful, but she was small and dark-eyed, graceful, and, with the glowing skin of her southern nature, a complete contrast to the tall blue-eyed Bertha, whose golden hair fell in profusion over her snowy shoulders, and reached to her kness. While Marie had a fiery spirit and a proud revengeful temper, Bertha looked like an angel, and her love was full of sweetness and trust. Day by day Waleran loved Bertha more, and wished he were free. But, instead of trying to bring this about, he played a double part; and went on paying visits at the Château de Salm as if nothing had come to chill his love for Marie, though her warm

nature soon discovered a change in his wooing; she grew sombre and suspicious; and before long it came to her ears that Waleran was paying court to Bertha de la Roche. However, she dissembled her anger, and received him as usual.

One afternoon, not long before the time appointed for the tournament, Waleran rode over to Salm. The day was hot; and, when he entered the chamber where Marie sat, he flung his cap carelessly on the settle beside him. Marie looked, and saw inside the cap a tress of long fair hair. At this her self-control fled. She broke in suddenly upon Waleran's smooth speeches; and, pointing to the tress, she taunted him with his perfidy.

He tried to speak, but she would not listen; and he was so stung by her reproaches and the scorn with which she spoke of Bertha, that he left her in anger, bidding her a last farewell.

When next he saw Bertha he wondered how he could ever have wasted a thought on Marie de Salm, and gave himself up to the fulness of his passion for the sweet fair-haired blue-eyed maiden.

At last the day fixed for the tournament arrived. Many knights presented themselves, and fought valiantly; but they all in turn yielded to Waleran, who

remained master of the field. The tender Bertha had looked on in fear and trembling for the safety of her lover; but now her heart beat tumultuously, her cheeks flushed, and her fair bosom heaved with joy. Her Waleran was victor; he would soon be her husband. But just as the last blast of the heralds was blown, and as Count Henri de la Roche was preparing to announce Count Waleran the hero of the day, a trumpet sounded outside the crowd, and a knight clad in black armour rode into the lists.

This new suitor looked so small, and was mounted on such a puny charger, that the bystanders smiled at his presumption.

"Poor youth, he is mad to enter the lists. 'Twill not take Count Waleran long to unhorse him," said the crowd; but Bertha turned pale, and in the fulness of her joy a sudden chill took possession of her soul.

At the first shock both lances were shivered; the black knight kept his seat unmoved, but Waleran reeled in his saddle. The combatants rode to either end of the lists, and fresh lances were given them.

This time the result of meeting was most unexpected. Waleran was unhorsed, and fell heavily, and the next moment his adversary was kneeling over him, his short dagger at his throat, bidding him yield. Loud acclama-

tions burst from the fickle crowd—Count Henri flung down his warder, and declared that the black knight had won the prize of his daughter's hand. A despairing shriek rang through the air, and Bertha sank back pale and fainting.

Meanwhile the black knight had been conducted to Count Henri, who placed the hand of his pale and trembling daughter in the victor's, and told him he had won her for his bride. It was remarked that the black knight kept his visor down.

The marriage was at once solemnised in the castle chapel, the stranger knight, without his helmet, appearing as a swarthy young man of almost evil aspect.

Count Waleran had been borne away to his pavilion to have his hurts tended, and Bertha sat in a dumb stupor, unable to realise this horrible change from joy to despair. She went through the ceremony as if she were in a dream. The banquet that followed the marriage lasted long, and was succeeded by dancing; but at last the entertainment came to an end; the bride and bridegroom had retired, and all was still in the castle.

Suddenly a piercing shriek rang from the tower in which was the bridal chamber—shriek following shriek, echoing along the dark galleries, and reaching to the topmost turret. Count Henri snatched at his sword,

and hurried to his daughter's chamber. It was still as death; the lights were extinguished, and as the moonlight came streaming in from the open window which looked out on the river, the Count saw that the room was empty. The shrieks had ceased, but the cry of a screech-owl jarred on his ear as he rushed to the window. Below the rocks on which the castle stood he saw a white form floating on the water. It was the body of his fair child; but the black knight had vanished —no trace of him remained. . . . Marie de Salm had that day vanquished her recreant lover, had afterwards wedded and then murdered Bertha. Infuriated at his desertion, she had resolved on revenge, and is supposed to have entered into a league with the Evil One, who promised her victory over Waleran. When she had flung Bertha from the window, she sprang after her; but Satan was at hand, the rock opened, and the miserable Marie was swallowed up for ever in eternal fire.

Count Waleran went to the Crusades, and came back and found another wife. We hear of him again some years later in the wars of the period.

The romance of these ruins is injured by their close proximity to the town; but it is curious to look down from the battlements on to the houses of La Roche, and to hear that after the beginning of the

sixteenth century it was regarded as one of the richest and most considerable towns of Luxembourg. It was the capital of the county of La Roche, which also contained the baronies of Houffalize, Beauraing, Han-sur-Lesse, Hamoir, and other lordships. This county of La Roche comprised nearly the whole of the Ardennes, and more than a third part of the Duchy of Luxembourg.

Our guide pointed out to us the hill Corumont opposite, and told us that there was a great stone there called "le lit du roi Pepin;" but, in considering the history of the Castle, Pepin d'Héristhal's occupation of it as a hunting-seat does not show its beginning. There is no doubt that the original tower on the rock was built by the Romans, that it was wrested from them by the Franks, and that it became under their kings a chief fortress of the Ardennes. We hear first of a Count of La Roche about 1082, when Henry, Bishop of Liège, convened a meeting of nobles to put down the fearful disorders and licence which, since the death of Duke Godefroi le Bossu, had devastated Belgium and the adjacent countries. Among the names of the young Duke Godefroi de Bouillon, Duke Gui d'Ardennes, Duke Henry of Limbourg, the Counts of Luxembourg, Namur, Louvain, Vianden, Salm, Juliers, Clermont, and Looz, is that of Henri, Count of La Roche.

At this council it was decreed that from Advent Sunday till Epiphany, and from Septuagesima to Whitsuntide, from daybreak on Fridays throughout the year to daybreak on Mondays, no one, under pain of heavy penalties, should carry arms or commit any act of violence within the diocese, and that a court of justice should be erected in Liège and be presided over by the Prince-Bishop, where all infractions of this edict should be judged, with crimes of murder, rapine, and such like enormities, committed on the lands of the assembled nobles. This was the beginning of the Tribunal de la Paix of Liège.

Henri de la Roche alone of all the assembled princes refused to submit himself to their united decisions. They tried first to persuade him, then they resorted to menace, but all in vain: our Count was inflexible. A league was formed against him, and Henri, after he had raised a little army, marched bravely to meet his enemies. He was of course overpowered by numbers, and forced to take refuge in his castle. For seven months he resisted the army of the allied nobles, though the young invincible Godefroi de Bouillon was among them. The castle remained impregnable, but at last hunger began to be felt within its walls. Then Henri thought of a stratagem which is still remembered in

La Roche. He caused a pig to be fed for some days, till it could eat no longer, and then he let it escape from the castle.

The besiegers pounced on it, and, finding it fat and good eating, concluded that the garrison was still well provisioned, and that it would be hopeless to prolong the siege. They therefore came to terms with the Count de la Roche—terms which exempted the inhabitants of the county from the jurisdiction of the Tribunal of Peace.

Fire and the plague have at various times destroyed the town and greatly reduced its population, but there is no sign of abject poverty about La Roche. As we looked from the castle ramparts, the whitewashed vine-covered cottages had a cheerful tranquil aspect, in bright contrast to the black rocks overhead.

Hubertine showed us from the ramparts a path that leads from Corumont to Beausaint. This is called the Pathway of the Dead, because the villagers of Harzé—a little hamlet beyond La Roche—belong to the Commune of Beausaint, and therefore carry their dead up this steep road, far away to the cemetery across the hills. While we stood looking at the varied view of hills and valleys, town and river, Hubertine, who had noticed our love for flowers, went about seeking them.

She had soon gathered a lovely nosegay of the blossoms that literally clothe some of these dark walls: many-coloured snapdragons, white rockets and crimson pinks and yellow star-flowers, and she got roots of those we had specially admired; finally, she offered me a bunch of sweet wild-thyme to keep as a memory of her quiet gentle self. There was something very interesting about Hubertine la Hire; she guided us so carefully up and down the broken steps, and into the huge dark vaults—now gathering more flowers, now climbing in search of wild strawberries, to "refresh Madame," she said. As we went up and down, and saw clearly the position of the castle, we realised how impregnable it must have been, for it would have been difficult even in later days to place cannon to bear on its strong walls.

From the ramparts we got a good idea of the walks and drives round La Roche; and we found these walks and drives delightful. The woods are so frequent and so near that even in hot August we could walk in cool green shadow on the hill-side, getting now and then peeps of valleys crossed by other hills, and the Ourthe showing its silver coils, sometimes far away, as it winds in and out round the feet of these strangely-shaped hills. One day I lost myself in one of these woods, and was half an hour before I could regain the track.

It was so dense, and the branches grew so near the ground, that I could hardly make a way through them. I was close to La Roche, but so high up on the top of the hill that there was no hope of help to find the path. I had really begun to think of the Babes in the Wood, when all at once I spied through the leaves a tiny track, so overgrown that it was plain the place was seldom visited, and this track led me out of the leafy labyrinth.

There are delicious green valleys beside the Ourthe and the smaller streamlets, but the most charming walk I took was up the bare hill-side towards sunset. The church, which is only remarkable for a bulbous spire, stands at the farthest end of the town, and beside it is a rough steep road up the end of the rock on which the castle stands. A little way along this road was a very small two-storied building, projecting beyond the other cottages. It looked more like a *grenier* than a house; for it had no windows, only a couple of openings, the upper one closed by wooden shutters. The lower one was open, and a very dirty-faced sunburnt woman was looking out from it, gesticulating and speaking Walloon dialect to a small frail child about eight years old who stood below, her fair hair streaming over her shoulders, and her blue eyes fixed on the woman with a very pitiful expression in them. She

was hugging a bundle of straw rather bigger than herself in her skinny arms.

The woman, about ten feet above, kept on pointing first to a rickety ladder beside the wall, and then to two large trusses of straw on the ground beside the child.

All at once she caught sight of me as I came up the steep road. "Help her, Madame," she said in French; and then, before I could answer, she asked pardon for her request.

However, there was clearly nothing else to be done. The place was still deserted; the neighbours had either gone to the hills to bring home their goats from pasture, or were still hard at work on the cultivated plateaux on the tops of the hills; for the Ardennais, both men and women, work like horses, even in full blaze of sunshine, and almost always far from home. As Georges Sand says: "On se demande comment on peut ensemencer et récolter avec de telles distances à franchir et tant de hauteurs à grimper."

So I fixed the ladder against the wall, told the little girl to go up a few steps, and then handed her one by one the huge bundles of straw, which the mother dragged with some difficulty through the opening and stowed away; then she showed her dirty face again, and poured out a perfect volley of gratitude.

Higher up the road was still rougher, full of loose stones; in front of a shed a woman was chopping the tender top shoots off the broom. This plant clothes the sides of some of the hills, and literally fringes the woods round La Roche.

She said she was getting supper ready for her goats. "They are coming home soon from the mountains," she added.

As I kept to the right up a still rougher climb, I met with constant smiling greetings, first from a handsome brown young fellow, wearing a blouse and carrying a scythe; next came a dark-eyed rough-headed girl driving two black goats—spirited handsome creatures; presently I met an older woman wearing black, and guiding two or three cows down the rugged path. As I reached the top of the spur, and paused to rest on the side of the hill, there came along, standing out sharply against the clear evening sky, yet mellowed in its soft light, an old wrinkled creature bending under her huge load of faggots. She told me she had been as far as the Bois de La Roche to cut them; she had slung the bundle round her bent shoulders, while her brown hands held fast an enormous apron-load of twigs and brambles. The dress of all these peasant women was much alike; some had black, others blue or brown

and purple skirts, a loose jacket, and an apron. The short scanty petticoat showed bonny legs and dark flesh-coloured woollen stockings. We saw few sabots at La Roche—strong leather shoes are better for their climbing life—and almost all, young and old, go bare-headed; this gives a squalid look to those even who are not very poor.

I kept now to the left along a path cut on the side of the hill, with a steep valley below me; opposite was Corumont, and the road to Houffalize ran along the bottom of the valley; beside it are dotted the last white houses of La Roche. Some of the huge black boulders beside me, grown over with gold-brown moss and silver lichen, starred now and then with the glow of herb-robert, or the pale gold of hawkweed, were "studies" of colour.

I soon came in sight of the little chapel I had been told to make for. Its tiny spire nestles under the dark rock, and stands somewhat aside, raised above the foot-path. The doors were wide open, and showed an abundance of votive offerings round the altar.

I had just seated myself on the rough steps leading up to it, when an old woman came along the path below. Her brown, withered arms were filled to over-flowing with fern and heather, and she looked very

picturesque as she came along the bare hill-side against her background of distant landscape across the deep valley below. I was wondering how she would carry her huge bundle safely to the bottom of the rough climb, when she seated herself on the stony ledge below the steps of the chapel, and nodded to me with the usual friendly greeting of the country.

All at once she looked behind her, and her smile changed into a scowl. "Jésu Maria! Mon Dieu!" she said devoutly, "que les gens sont mauvais."

I asked what ailed her, for she was looking suspiciously at me.

She groaned and grunted. "Is it not bad, then," she said, "when the chapel doors are always kept locked, that I find them open?—some mauvais gens, touristes," she tossed her head scornfully, "have forced them open in the night, to shelter themselves from the rain, but it is a sacrilege."

She went on muttering, keeping a suspicious look-out on my face. I tried not to laugh; and I suppose she finally came to the conclusion that I did not look sturdy enough to have forced open those two heavy doors, for presently she left off scowling, and asked what I thought of the view, nodding her head towards the sunset.

The sun was now very near the hills opposite, and

the whole landscape was steeped in soft, lovely light. On the left, far below, was the dark spire of the church, the town beyond it hidden by the hill I had climbed; above it was the gloomy castle. Just opposite, behind the irregularly slated white cottages, was the long ridge of Corumont, and on the right a stretch of dark woods. Far on the left came a bold range of varied hills; these slope down into the valley, and cross the foot of Corumont; and in the triangle of distance thus created hill rises behind hill, revealing enchanting effects of colour, as the warm light touches their heather-covered sides—red and gold-brown and varied greens, all soften into many-toned purple and olive, as tender mists rise in faint blue wreaths, betraying the presence of hidden valleys formed by the coils of the glistening Ourthe. On the right of this triangle a golden corn-field shows brilliantly between slopes of purple heather on this side and blue distance beyond; on the steep side of one rocky hill a goat is still browsing.

All at once the pale blue sky grows rosy, the sun sinks behind a long line of watery gray cloud—a mute warning that to-morrow will not be as gloriously bright as to-day.

"Did Madame ever see anything so fine?" said my old woman. I nodded to her, and praised her view,

and then found my way down the shoulder of the hill into a road leading to the wood of La Roche. This wood is delightful, full of charming walks, and abounding with small game. In a wild valley, about midway in the wood, is a huge group of blocks of stone, which seem half-quarried out of the bramble-wreathed rock behind them. This is called *Le diab' chesté;* for here it is said the Evil One tried to build a palace. Three times he laid the foundations, and three times the hill was shaken and the building fell, a ruined heap of stones. It was too late this evening for the wood, so I climbed the hill on the right of the road. A little path led me across a pleasant waste, planted with thorn trees, with heather and bracken below. At the top of the waste I saw a barley field, and, leaving this on the left, came out on a plateau with fields of wheat and potatoes. Potatoes and coffee are the chief food of the peasants, and yet they must toil up all this way to cultivate their plots of ground. The whole plateau was yellow with corn marigold, at which some women were diligently weeding. I gathered handfuls of these splendid flowers, much larger than I had ever found before, and went on till I reached the edge of the ridge. There lay La Roche and the valley of the Ourthe, so far below me that I felt puzzled as to how I had

climbed so high. It is so very steep and precipitous here that my head felt giddy looking down; and I soon found I must be very heedful in descending, for the path is made of loose slate, and every now and then this slips from underfoot.

In a very steep corner were two small brown cows feeding on some scanty grass—it was a puzzle how they could have climbed there. Many feet below I came upon a bare-headed, bare-footed urchin, who told me he was minding the cows. The view of the river opened charmingly as I came down, and I felt quite rewarded for the steep slippery climb down-hill.

On the terraced road below leading into La Roche I met a tall peasant carrying his scythe over his shoulder. He saw my flowers, and stopped in front of me.

"You do not know what you have there, Madame" (he looked full of pity for my ignorance): "it is poison."

"No, Monsieur," I said, "this is not a poisonous plant."

He shook his head.

"On the contrary, Madame; it is poison. It will not poison you, but it poisons our land, it ruins our crops; ah! it is a good-for-nothing weed. It destroys us; we dig it up, we tread it down, and behold its little

seeds fly here—there!" he pointed expressively, "wherever the wind chooses to carry them, and so it spreads —ah!" He shrugged his shoulders, frowned, and made a movement with his foot as if it would have given him pleasure to trample on my beautiful flowers, which, when I reached home, seemed to fill the room with golden light.

There are many beautiful walks and excursions to be taken from La Roche. About six or seven kilomètres off is the village of Ortho; near this are some enormous blocks of very white quartz, called Les Cailloux de Mouzon.

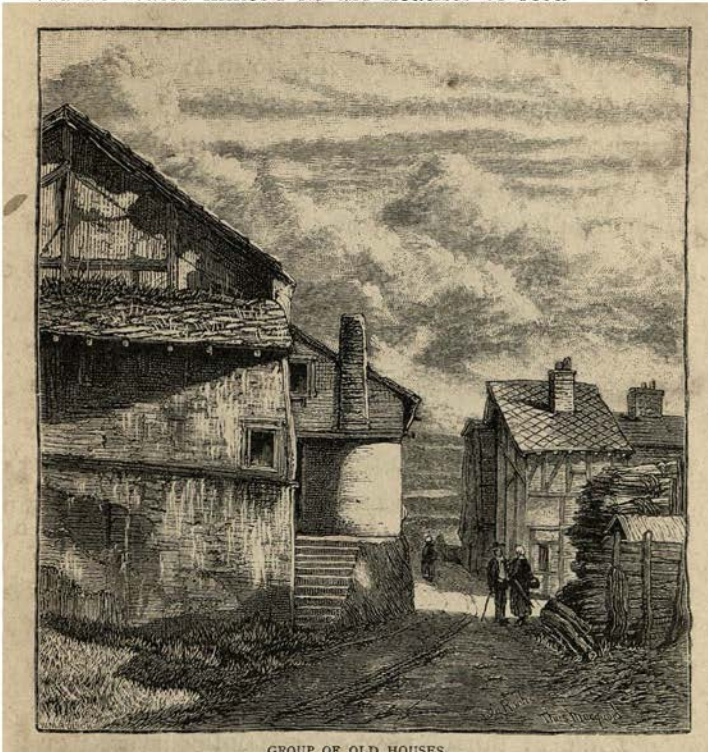
Once upon a time a shepherd, whose heart was as hard as a stone, used to feed his flock on this hill-side. One day he saw a pilgrim come toiling along, on his way to the chapel of St. Thibaut. Now, every one knows that the chapel is a good way farther off, on the hill of Montaigu.

The shepherd noticed that the pilgrim seemed weary and foot-sore. Presently he reached the spot where the shepherd sat at his ease, with a loaf and a huge pitcher of water beside him.

"I die of thirst," moaned the fainting man; "give me some water, and St. Thibaut will reward you."

"Then go to St. Thibaut—go to the devil, if you will," said the hard-hearted shepherd; "leave me in peace. I've too much of pilgrims and beggars."

"You are uncharitable, my friend," said the pilgrim; and he seated himself on the heather to rest.



GROUP OF OLD HOUSES.

"Go your ways," said the shepherd rudely; "I will have no beggars on my pastures."

And as the pilgrim rose and moved slowly away, the cruel shepherd flung a stone after him.

Then the pilgrim turned back, and picking up the stone he flung it at the shepherd.

Ever since that time the hard-hearted shepherd, his dog and his sheep, have remained on the hill of Mouzon, changed into three blocks of quartz. For the pilgrim was no other than the Saviour Himself, on his way to bless the remains of St. Thibaut.

These hills abound in legends, chiefly about hidden treasure, and the devices of the Evil One to ensnare men's souls; there are Nutons, too; but these do not seem so plentiful as in the caves farther west. But between La Roche and Houffalize, a most wild and beautiful walk of many miles, every hill has its romantic history. It is a fatiguing but very delightful expedition, partly beside the Ourthe, partly across the hills *en pleine* Ardenne. The road from La Roche is by the Chemin des Gattes which leads to Berisménil where there was once a strong castle. There is a cross near Berisménil, on a hill above the Ourthe, and this is the story told about it.

There was once a Lord of Berisménil who was the sworn brother-in-arms and friend of the Lord of Samrée. Nothing was ever seen like the affection of these two lords, and folks likened it to the friendship between David and Jonathan. So it went on growing

with their age and strengthening with their strength. It promised, too, to bear lasting fruit in the union of their children, for the only son of the Lord of Samrée passionately loved the fair Marie, the only daughter of De Berisménil. All at once some land which trenched on the domains on both lordships had to be appropriated, and for the first time the two friends disagreed ; a coolness arose, and they saw one another rarely. Then there came a fresh difficulty about some conflicting rights which in the old times would have been settled without dispute between the two loving friends ; but with this element of discord between them it only served to widen the breach.

Mutual defiances were exchanged, and the lovers were forbidden even to think of one another.

In fact, the Lord of Berisménil told his daughter that she must prepare to marry the Count de la Roche. Marie wept ; but her father insisted, and told her that when next he spoke on the subject he expected to find her in a more submissive humour.

In the evening she rode out in a melancholy mood. So absorbed was she by her sorrow that, letting the reins lie on her horse's neck, she took no heed of where he went. Presently he stumbled on the broken ground, took fright, and plunged violently forward, to

what the terrified girl now saw was the edge of the precipice overlooking the Ourthe. Marie shrieked, and gave herself up for lost, but all at once her bridle was seized and her headlong course stayed at a few steps from the dizzy precipice. Marie saw the handsome face of her lover, and she recovered from the faintness her terror had caused. But after a few moments they had to rouse from the happiness of their meeting. Marie told her story; and the young lord insisted that if her father next day pressed the other marriage she must consent to fly with him, or she would inevitably be wedded to the Count de la Roche. Marie protested, but she dared not linger: she knew that, if her father's suspicions were roused, all hope of escape would be ended. Her lover saw that she hesitated.

"If you do not meet me to-morrow outside the castle walls," he said, "it is because you wish to marry the Count de la Roche."

This was too much for the tender maiden, and it was agreed that as soon as it grew dusk on the next night she would fly with the young Lord of Samrée.

Next morning she summoned courage and sought her father.

"My lord,"—she trembled so that her voice sounded

weak and hesitating,—"I did not tell you yesterday, but I can never do as you wish. I cannot marry the Count de la Roche."

The Lord of Berisménil grew pale with anger; he stamped and swore, and vowed he would bend her to his will. He bade Marie leave him and keep her chamber.

So she did, very gladly, till evening, when she came softly down the winding stone staircase in one of the corner turrets; her maid meantime had seen that all was ready, and Marie found at a little distance from the walls her lover waiting on a powerful black horse. The creature stamped with impatience, and it seemed to Marie, while her lover lifted her on the saddle behind him, that the horse's nostrils flashed fire; but in an instant they were flying rapidly across the hills towards Houffalize. The sky now suddenly became black as night, thunder rolled across the hills, and Marie grew breathless with fear, when all at once came the thud, thud of pursuit, and, looking back, the Lord of Samrée saw a warrior fully armed gaining rapidly on them.

"Take my sword,"—he drew it and placed it in her cold hand,—"and as the pursuer nears us strike at him boldly."

"I cannot—I will not:" she cried; but almost as she spoke, the pursuer rode up and stretched out his hand to snatch her from her lover. Then Marie struck desperately, and severed the horseman's head from his body; the lightning flashed out vividly, bringing into relief the wild rocks and the river below them, and showing the wretched Marie, as the severed head rolled to the ground, the face of her father. She turned wildly to her lover, and saw that he was in flames, and she felt that the body round which her arm remained firmly clasped was burning without being consumed.

The horse was now going at double speed, no longer towards Houffalize, but making direct for the river. Marie shrieked, but she could not cry for help: her tongue was chained by some horrible spell. . . . The young Lord of Samrée had sought Satan's aid to revenge himself on the Lord of Berisménil, and the horse he rode was the Evil One, who as soon as he reached the river, plunged with his double burden into a gulf which opened to receive these wretched lovers. The cross is said to have been erected on the spot where the father's head fell and was recognised by his daughter.

Another quaint legend is as follows:—Once it happened that a peasant was going home to La Roche who had been cutting faggots on the farther side of the

hill near the Chemin des Gattes. He had climbed half-way up, and, looking back, he saw that he had left his billhook below among the bushes. As he came down he saw a little black kid—which let itself be caught without making any effort to escape. In his haste to secure it, the peasant only noticed its glossy black coat, and quite overlooked a scarlet spot on its forehead which might have made him more cautious. He went down and fetched his billhook, and slung the little goat over his shoulders by a cord he had, rejoicing that he had found such a prize.

As he toiled uphill again it seemed to the peasant that the weight upon his shoulders grew heavier each step he took. He paused to rest, and the weight dragged him almost down to the ground. "How is this?" he said. "Can this little kid so outweigh my strength?" He began to climb again, and his burden had become as heavy as an ox, and nearly strangled him. He forced himself a few steps on, staggering under his load, till he had almost reached the top of the hill. But he bent suddenly double and found he could go no farther—he was pinned to the earth by the weight behind him. With a loud oath, he loosed the cord from round his neck and flung the kid from him.

A harsh jeering laugh was heard among the rocks.

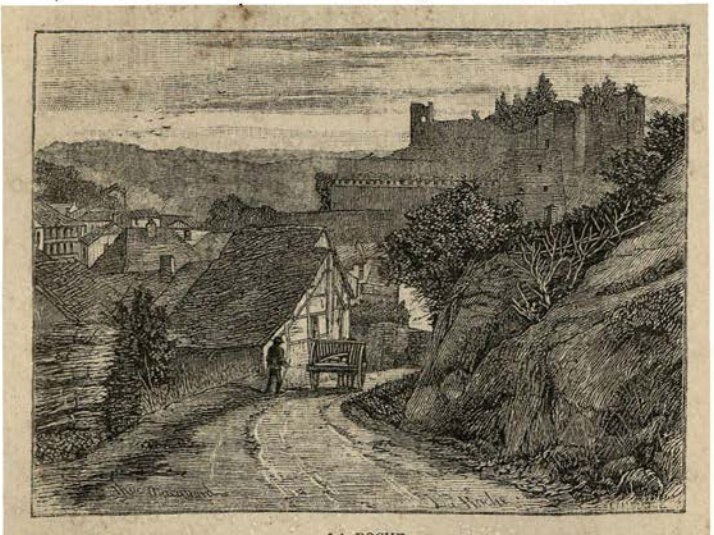
The peasant turned in terror, and saw the Evil One sitting just where he had flung the goat. In fact, Satan had had a hard day's work, and was very tired; and, not feeling disposed to climb uphill, had in the form of a kid tempted the peasant to carry him to save him the weary journey.

After passing Berisménil the next village reached is Nadrin, on the top of the ridge of hills. There is a grand view here of the surrounding country, and of the windings of the Ourthe. After leaving Nadrin, which is the best halting-place on the road, one descends the hill, and crosses the brook of Belle-Meuse, then by Petite-Mormoul to Achouffe, and from Achouffe to Houffalize. The scenery is wild and often grand, and the region is full of these uncanny traditions.

Up a turning at the back of our hotel, is a curious little building of the middle ages, and some old houses; and a little way beyond these houses is, perhaps, the best point of view of the ruined castle. It stands boldly out against the sky, towering over the surrounding valleys.

Besides the beauty and interest of its surroundings, La Roche has a special charm of its own, and I hardly know how to express it except by the word "exhilaration." Some of this it doubtless owes to the pure bracing air of the hills: but the frank sociable character of the

people is also a great charm, and causes constant amusement, and, in spite of its many discomforts, there is a prevailing comic element in our very original inn. We did not enjoy our meals, perhaps, but we have seldom laughed so heartily as we did in those



LA ROCHE.

merry days at La Roche. The Belgian ladies, it is true, both middle-aged and young, used to drink four or five large tumblers of beer, both at dinner and supper, and wine as well, but they never seemed the worse for it; and the kindness and geniality of the three landlords was unfailing, even when they were

worried with an overplus of guests. If the Hôtel Meunier would raise its prices, be more choice in its food, get a better cook, and have a clean female housekeeper—for the brothers manage everything (we were told that the accommodation and living had improved at the other hotel, which was formerly very bad)—La Roche would be a sort of earthly paradise.

The genial, simple people of La Roche are thoroughly industrious. There are a few breweries and tanneries in the little town, also an earthenware manufactory; most of the small houses have an open cellar beneath them, with steps leading down from the street. These cellars are used for stabling the goats, for almost every family possesses one or two of these useful animals. It gives an added charm to the landscape to see these hardy climbers, perched on the highest crags, seeking for scanty grass tufts in the chinks of slaty rock, guarded by a tiny child on a narrow footpath many feet below; and it seems like an idyl as we mount the hill in evening light, and meet a comely young matron, with a bundle of fern poised lightly on her head, coming slowly down the steep slaty path, driving two or three goats before her. When we read the charming account of La Roche by Monsieur Eugéne Gens, we did not expect to find it so near the truth.

CHAPTER XI.

THROUGH THE ARDENNES TO COO.

WE much wished to go to Houffalize, but the diligence did not start till eleven at night, and other vehicles seem to be scarce in the little town. Although there is always the huge two-storied diligence which carries the post and which goes three times a day, with much ringing of bells and cracking of whips, to Melreux-Hotton —a charming journey beside the Ourthe; by far the best way in coming to La Roche direct from Dinant is to drive to Ciney, and thence by train to Melreux, changing at Marloie. It used to amuse us to watch the departure of this huge two-storied omnibus, and to see the people dropping their letters into the post-box outside it. At last, after some consultation with the youngest of the brothers Meunier, we learned that there was "un petit break" at our disposal, if we thought that we could pack ourselves and our baggage into it. We had quite determined to go by way of

Houffalize and Gouvy, and thus to drive through the wildest part of the Ardennes, but in the evening a knock came at our door, and in walked a tall broad-shouldered Ardennais, who announced himself as our driver. He at once scoffed at our proposed route; we had planned far too much for one day, and the "petit break" could only be had to-morrow; in fact we must go his way or not at all. Feeling that we were in the heart of the Ardennes, and that in the petit break lay our only hope of getting out of La Roche eastwards, we consented to modify our plans, and to strike the line of the Spa and Luxembourg railway rather higher than we had intended, to go to Viel-Salm station instead of Gouvy, thence by rail to Trois-Ponts, which the descriptions of Monsieur Gens had made us much wish to visit.

The next morning was lovely, but to our driver's vexation we would not start till eleven o'clock, as we were in no haste to leave La Roche—but afterwards we regretted our delay, for much of the road lies across a high plain country, without shelter from the intense sunshine.

We had said good-bye to all our friends, who had come out to superintend the stowing away of our luggage, and also we took our leave of the two

elder brothers Meunier, but the youngest was nowhere to be found, so we left a message for him, and clattered up the street towards the Houffalize road. We had not gone far when there was a loud outcry behind us, and our driver stopped. The missing brother came tearing along the street holding on his black straw hat with one hand and frantically waving the other.

"Aha!" he said, with his beaming smile, "it would never have done if you had started, Monsieur, and I had not said good-bye to Madame, but it is *au revoir* is it not, for you will come again to La Roche?" and he stood and watched us out of sight.

The first few miles of the drive were full of picturesque beauty, and presently, when we had circled the hill and the road turned, there was La Roche lying below in its green nest, almost girdled round by the shining Ourthe, which then flows away into a deep and sombre valley, beside a narrow green tract which lies between road and river; all round rise dark hills with gorges between them, where some mountain stream flows down to join the Ourthe; in the midst of the town rises up the dark rock bearing the ruined fortress. It is impossible to paint in words the sudden and beautiful effect of this farewell view of the little rock-girt town.

We were now in the forest of La Hesse, the grassy banks on each side crowned by deep woods of large forest trees, the finest we had seen in the Ardennes.

After this our road lay chiefly over open country, with very distant views, from which we gathered that we were crossing some of the highest ground in the province. The road was pleasantly bordered after a while by continued avenues of alternate ash and mountain-ash trees, the last rich in red and tawny berries; after some distance the red berries ceased, and dark firs alternated with the feathery green of the ash. We were in some fear of losing our train, but our horse went well, and we reached the station at Viel-Salm in excellent time.

The village is charmingly placed among rocky cliffs, and here we began acquaintance with the little river Salm, sparkling and singing over the gray stones in its bed. It makes its way, through a precipitous and rocky valley full of constant curves, to Trois-Ponts, and the rail follows it for some distance; between Viel-Salm and Trois-Ponts is a station called Grand-Halleux, and on a hill called Wannes, which lies between this and the town of Stavelot, lies the famous stone called Le Faix du Diable. It is utterly distinct from the rocks around it, and yet is so enormous that

it is difficult to suppose it to have been brought there by any human agency. This is the reason the peasants give for its strange presence on the hill of Wannes :—

LE FAIX DU DIABLE.

Many years ago this part of the country was full of license and wickedness, and the Prince of Darkness ruled over it, with few to gainsay his power. All at once he learned that St. Remaclius, the apostle of the Ardennes, had come preaching the gospel to Stavelot, and intended to build an abbey there. The saint began to build, and Satan did all he could to hinder him—but in vain. The work was of God and it prospered, and the devil saw that his power would be dangerously attacked in Stavelot. Finding all his efforts to hinder the work useless, he determined to wait till the building was finished, and the monks assembled on the day of consecration, and then at one blow to destroy it. So when the eve of the day arrived he provided himself with an enormous block of quartz, intending to carry it to Stavelot, and to fling it on the roof of the abbey in the midst of the service.

The abbey looked very grand, now that it was finished; many princes and nobles had been invited to assist at

its consecration; and the eve of the great day arrived. St. Remaclius, who had gone to bed late, slept soundly; he had not long closed his eyes when he was awakened. An angel stood by his bedside—

"Awake," he said; "your deadly foe is at work, and unless you can stay his march to Stavelot he may yet destroy your abbey."

The vision disappeared, and St. Remaclius rose from his bed, and prayed the rest of the night for help and deliverance.

When morning came he summoned his monks, and bade them collect, from within and without the monastery, all the old shoes and sandals they could get, no matter how worn and dilapidated. Never was seen such a heap of disreputable foot-coverings as the heap that soon lay before St. Remaclius.

"Stuff them all into a large sack," said the saint; and then choosing out the most saintly of the brethren, he placed the sack on his shoulders, and bade him go forth to meet the Evil One.

When the monk had gone some distance, he reached the hill called Tier-du-Diable, and looking up, whom should he see but Satan himself, gasping and panting with the effort of carrying his enormous stone up the side of the hill.

"Hallo there!" cried Satan; "how far to Stavelot?"

"That is more than I can tell you," said the monk; "but look here, neighbour! I will show you my load, and then you can judge for yourself;" and opening his sack, he flung out its contents at the feet of the Evil One. The shoes and soles and worn-out sandals seemed to have increased in quantity since they had been put in the sack. They were so many, and so worn-out, that the Devil could make nothing of them, and he looked impatiently at the monk.

"What are all these old things for?" he growled.

"I was going to observe that you can now judge for yourself how far it is to Stavelot," said the monk, carelessly, "for I have worn out all these shoes since I left the town behind me."

The Devil looked thunderstruck, for he saw that it was hopeless for him to reach the abbey with his load in time to prevent the ceremony which would for ever shield the monastery from his power. He uttered a dreadful yell, flung down his load, and disappeared; but the stone remained, and has ever since been called Le Faix du Diable.

It appears that when St. Remaclius began to build the abbey, he had only one poor ass to carry stone from a neighbouring quarry to the builder. The country

was covered with the wild forest, and one day a fierce wolf came out of the forest and killed the ass. St. Remaclius punished the wolf by making him do the ass's work, and every day after this the wolf might be seen carrying heavy loads of stone between the quarry and the convent. The saint tutored the savage beast, till he did his work perfectly, always saying to him, when he reached his destination, in the patois of the country—

"Stav-leu." "Stop wolf."

Hence the present name—Stavelot; but the story is a repetition of the legend of Cugnon.

At the station for Trois-Ponts we got out; it is very pretty and well cared for; but the stationmaster and porter looked at us and our luggage in an unpromising manner.

"Where do you wish this taken?" said the porter; and when we answered, "To the Hotel des Ardennes at Trois-Ponts," he shook his head.

"There is not a hotel—there is an auberge—but;"—and then he looked at me and shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "Madame cannot lodge there."

We were very tired and very hungry, and the sun still shone hotly overhead; the road was white with dust, as we followed the porter's truck to Trois-Ponts.

The scenery is charming, beside the beautiful river Amblève, into which the Salm falls at this point, as well as another stream; there is a bridge over each river, hence the name; but when we saw the miserable little house to which our guide had brought us our hearts sank. However, we asked if we could be lodged. For answer, a man and a girl came out, and looked at us and our baggage. "No;" the girl shook her head vigorously, "we do not take in ladies; we have no rooms fit for them."

We turned to the porter in despair; we had so set our minds on staying at Trois-Ponts that we had planned out no other resting-place before Remouchamps, and that we knew must be many miles away. It seemed to us that we must go back to the station and thence to Stavelot.

"There is a hotel a little farther on," the porter said, nodding his head to the left, "at the Cascade de Coo; but I cannot go there with you—I must go back to the station, there will be another train in presently."

There was nothing else to be done. We called the girl out of the auberge again, left our luggage in her care, and started off beside the river for the Cascade de Coo. The name sounded most soothing, and we tried to forget our hunger and fatigue, and to get as

much shade as we could. It was a lovely walk, if we had only been able to enjoy it; full of pictures made by the sparkling ever-curving river, but hunger and fatigue are kill-joys. First, we walked between the Amblève and the steep rocky cliff, into which the railway had disappeared. When afterwards we travelled down the whole line from Spa to Luxembourg, we marvelled at the way in which the difficulties of the country have been surmounted. The line seems to have no rest; it is perpetually piercing through these rocky hills, or crossing the rivers that intersect this charmingly picturesque country; and nearer Spa it has to avoid the widely-spread marshes of the district. Soon we came to a fir wood on the right, which gave a pleasant shadow. We had been told of a short by-way on the left, through the meadows, to Coo; but we feared to lose our way, and so kept along the highroad, which took us farther from the river bank, and the exquisite beauty of this peaceful valley, glowing with afternoon light. A little way on we came to a pretty little cottage, with a well-kept garden in front, full of flowers. A clean, healthy-looking old woman, her quaint straw bonnet tilted over her eyes, and a white veil hanging behind, came forward to the gate, and presented me with a bunch of sweet-peas, bidding me welcome to Coo.

We thought this charming; but next minute our hospitable friend spoilt the effect of her welcome by holding out her hand, and informing us that she was a very poor woman, and that she had nothing to buy bread with. We had been for so long too far away from towns to meet with beggars—at any rate beggars

THE VILLAGE OF COO.

with a cottage and a garden; and it seemed to us that we were getting a proof of the deteriorating influence of fashionable resorts, for Coo is only about ten miles below Spa, and is one of its lions.

Half a mile farther we came out on the road beside the river, with the bridge over the rock, from which the cascade falls; opposite us was the hotel. On its right

was the church—this is Le Grand Coo; and on the left, separated from the inn by a wide arm of the river, which takes its way round among the hills and rejoins the Amblève lower down, so that the hotel seems to stand on the junction of two rivers, is the sweet little village called Le Petit Coo, its white cottages nestling round orchards and gardens, gay with phlox and golden rod; while on each side the river rise lofty hills, with pointed summits, by far the highest we have met with in the Ardennes. A natural wall of rock bars the passage of the river at this point, and through this a double passage has been bored. From the lower ground near the church there is a fine view of the cascade thus caused, and also of the grand view down the river as it winds away towards Spa.

The hotel looked in a sleepy condition, though there seemed much preparation for visitors in the way of open-air chairs and tables, and amusement; and in the garden below the bridge there was a tent, an archery ground, and space for any kind of out-door sport.

A self-satisfied indifferent waiter seemed to be spending his time in flinging pennies into an artificial frog's mouth, and was so pleased with his own skill that he scarcely left off to answer our inquiry about rooms. However, when the pleasant landlady appeared, we

found we could have excellent rooms, and that the inside of the hotel was exquisitely clean, and promised much comfort. She took us up well-carpeted stairs to a pretty little *salon* on the first floor, overlooking the river, with a pianoforte, books, etc. We found the beds excellent and the cooking good, but our hostess told us, to our surprise, that as yet they had received few visitors (they were new occupants), except those who came out for the day from Spa, and as the owners of the other little inn pay the drivers to take people to their house, as yet the merits of the hotel of the Cascade are unknown. There is no table-d'hôte; everything is served à la carte; but the mistress said she would gladly arrange a pension at six francs per day. Certainly Coo is a most perfect retreat for those who wish for beautiful scenery, mountain air, cleanliness, and comfort, only I strongly advise those who may be inclined to stay there to write some days beforehand, as, from its isolation, there is a difficulty in getting provisions at a moment's notice; and also there may not be always a carriage at Trois-Ponts.

The hostess was much troubled to hear of our walk. She said that hitherto a carriage from the hotel had been in the habit of meeting the trains at Trois-Ponts, which is the nearest station, but her horse had fallen

lame, and she had sold him, and as it was late in the season she should not buy another till next year, "when perhaps," she said complacently, "we also shall have a station at Coo."

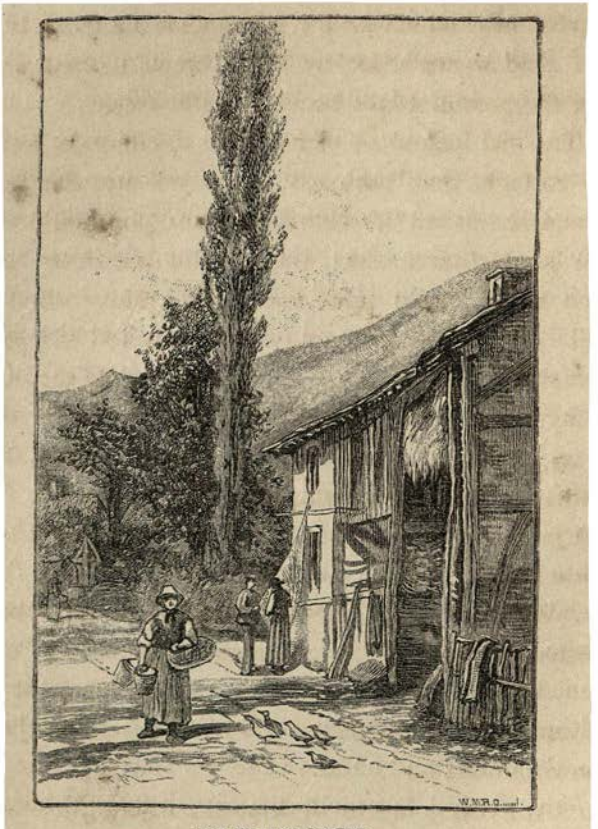
A station at Coo! The idea of an engine hissing and snorting in the quiet peaceful valley was profanation; but naturally our placid, dark-eyed friend was thinking of her pocket rather than of the ruin which a station must bring to the special charm of Coo.

I shall never forget all we saw from our window that evening. First came a woman in most picturesque attire with a bundle of faggots; then a bareheaded girl leading a cow down to the river; then several women with their cans and pitchers going to fetch water; and presently there was the moon shining over the immense hill opposite, and lighting up the rugged rocky valley and the silver river below, and through it all was the perpetual murmur of the cascade.

We were singularly fortunate in weather through the Ardennes, for from the time we left Florenville we had cloudless skies and glorious sunshine. Next morning was full of golden light; as we strolled down beside the green-bordered river, it danced and sparkled in the sunshine. A brown cow had wandered from the shallow edge and stood on a gray stone some little way in

the clear stream, drinking; a woman came down to the brink with twin pails suspended from a yoke across her shoulders. Her costume, that of the village, was more special than any we had yet seen. She wore a black close-clinging petticoat, with a coffee-brown body, and had white sleeves reaching the elbow, an upright straw bonnet, something like that of the Antwerp milk-women, the crown tilted up so that the brim came over the eyes, and a broad bit of ribbon put flat across the front. Sometimes the bonnet is lined with the same ribbon, but it always has strings hanging down on each side, and a white muslin veil or curtain, called a razil, a quarter of a yard deep, hanging behind. The men wear blouses, and the steeple-crowned rush hat, with a sloping brim, we had seen at La Roche. As we turned the corner leading away from the river into the village, we noticed that these dainty-looking white-washed cottages, half-covered with clinging vine sprays, had one slope of their low-gabled roofs much longer than the other; and under this longer side, which reaches near the ground, is usually the cow or faggot shed.

A girl, with her bonnet tilted over her eyes, and wearing a loose jacket, was standing in front of a white-washed, half-timbered cottage, with open green shutters. Under a hood against the wall was a crucifix in painted



THE VILLAGE STREET.

wood. On the right of the cottage was a grassed orchard, with apple trees richer in fruit than any we had seen; and on the other side a dark alley of

fir-trees, near which an old woman sat knitting in the cool shadow, while below her a brook dashed noisily over the brown stones beneath the fir trees.

The girl looked so picturesque standing in front of the cottage, that presently, when we met her in the village, we asked if she would stand for her portrait. She laughed, and said it was not the first time she had been asked to do this; and she certainly stood very well. She told us her name was Katharine Philippe, and that she lived at the café at the entrance of the village, a tiny but picturesque cottage, with a staircase coming down into the entrance, which was also the kitchen. Katharine told us that she lived there with her father and mother and sisters and brothers, and that they all worked hard for their living.

"We own some land—oh yes," she said; "but we are too poor to farm it ourselves, so we let it to others, who employ us to work upon it. Allez! I ought to be at work there now," she said, with a glance at the sun above the hill.

"Are you going to work on the hill in this heat?" I said.

Katharine looked at me with an amused smile.

"It makes no matter to me whether the sun is out or in," she said. "I have my bonnet,"—she touched

it. "I love the sun. I like all but the cold. Ah! Madame, but it is cold here in winter."

We were quite sorry to part from Katharine Philippe. She was not pretty, but she spoke well and intelligently, and looked thoroughly clean and honest. We could have lingered several days at Coo, sketching its pretty cottages and their surroundings; our hostess told us that the views from the tops of the hills were splendid; indeed, whichever way one turns there is beauty, either in the view opposite, where beyond the great hill a pleasant upland meadow shows beside the Amblève; or, turning one's back on this, the sight of the sweet village, nestling among its fruit and flowers, and the dark, swift stream, bordered by tall trees, that divides it from the Inn of the Cascade.

After some trouble and bargaining we found we could get a one-horse carriage from the other inn to take us to Remouchamps, about nineteen miles, for eighteen francs. We were told that a small carriage would take us more quickly than a larger one with two horses, as the road was not good, and the hills were very steep for a heavy carriage.

We had heard much of the beauty of this drive, and indeed it was for this chiefly that we had come to Coo, ignorant of the great charm we should find in the little village.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VALLEY OF THE AMBLÈVE.

THE Coo Valley is narrow, and the hills are so steep and lofty that one would feel walled in by their rocky sides but for the playful wanderings of the gay and sparkling Amblève—the most coquettish of rivers—never going straight and quietly on its way, but either curving abruptly round the base of some projecting hill, as if it were hastening out of sight, or foaming over masses of gray stone which have fallen into its bed from the rocks above, or forming little cascades where some tributary brook comes hastening out of a dark gorge in the cliff on its farther bank.

When our vehicle appeared we found it was very

small for us and for our baggage. However, after a great deal of manœuvring and cording, our traps were accommodated in various parts of the little carriage. As we leave the village, the sides of the gorge are purple in their depth of shadow, and a faint blue mist hangs over the little stream. The scene is very wild and picturesque here—far more beautiful than anything we had yet seen in the Ardennes. It would make a delightful walking journey to follow the Amblève from Trois-Ponts to Comblain-au-Pont, where it falls into the Ourthe, a distance of about twenty miles, with halting-places at Coo and at Remouchamps.

At some little distance from Coo the road parted. We kept to the left, and soon found ourselves in a beautiful little village built among fir trees on the slope of the hill on each side the way. We asked its name from a villager, and learned that it was La Gleize, and that from it there is a delightful walk to Coo, on the opposite bank of the Amblève.

Besides the fir trees, there were orchards full of fruit all round us; and among the fruit trees large white-washed half-timbered houses, with thatched roofs of the same character we had seen before, the slope of the gable shallow on one side, and the other almost reaching the ground; these long slopes shelter stacks of brushwood

and faggots—there seemed everywhere to be piles of faggots. Up the side of one house was nailed a tall apricot tree, spreading its branches, laden with golden fruit and yellow-green leaves, over the white wall. We asked a rough-headed girl beside the house if the apricots were to be bought. She called out something in an incomprehensible jargon, which our driver interpreted into "Not ripe." This village of La Gleize looked idyllic; no doubt on closer inspection there would be plenty of drawbacks to weaken its fascinations. Behind us was the lofty hill of Coo, and across it a range of darker hills; while beside us, on a lower level than the road and the village, was the dashing osier-bordered river.

We next passed a wood, in which our driver pointed out a chapel dedicated to St. Anne. The road now went on mounting, and we were among cornfields on a wide plateau overlooking green meadows in the river valley, which had widened considerably. On the opposite hill is the old château of Vaux Renard; and farther on, though nearer the river, are the white cottages of a village. The air was deliciously invigorating. We were on such high ground that, although the country was open, and the sun was shining hotly, we felt a delightful breeze. As we went on our horizon grew more and more extensive, and presently we came in

sight of a village on the top of a hill, with its church rising up in the midst of dark stone cottages. This was Stoumont, and we wanted our driver to stop here and rest his horse, as we had been driving on a stony uneven road for six miles in the heat of the sun, and we knew that this was the best halting-place of the wild and unfrequented country. The view from Stoumont is magnificent. Below is the wild valley of the Amblève; on the opposite side, perched on a rock, is Targnon; and close by, the river Lienne issues from a dark savage-looking valley to join the Amblève. We should have liked to stay some time at Stoumont, but our driver was inexorable; he said the road was worse than he expected, and that if we delayed he should never get back to Coo to-night.

So we drove on, ever mounting a steep dark hill which turned away from the river. Presently we came to a lonely château, too modern to be picturesque, standing by itself on the bare hill-side, with a garden in which were a few stunted shrubs. It looked perfectly forlorn. We had quite left the river by this time, and the country grew every moment barer and less interesting, as we either crossed wide tracts of cultivated land, with a boundless view of distant country, or else mounted the bare hill-side.

Now, our guide-books had told us that the road we were to take descends after passing Stoumont, and follows the course of the river. We remonstrated with the driver, who was stolid and stupid, and showed him the road traced on the map beside the Amblève. He had been impenetrably silent all the way; now he only shrugged his shoulders with the usual contempt shown by his class for book-information, got on his driving-seat, and whipped his horse.

We drove on and on, feeling more and more uneasy and disappointed, for we had been led to expect that the most beautiful part of our route lay between Stoumont and Remouchamps. At last we reached level ground, and a long straight white highroad stretched its length before us; beside it was a handpost, with a hand pointing to Pepinster. At sight of this our driver stopped and got down from his seat, and went and examined the handpost. We were journeying due north instead of due west; and he came shambling and shuffling to the side of the carriage.

"It is not my fault," he said. "I do not know the way beyond Stoumont. At the Hôtel de la Cascade they told me to go *tout droit*."

We felt very angry. "Why did you not ask, if you did not know your way?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"There was no one to ask at Stoumont. Besides, they said *tout droit*, and there was no other road; and I have driven *tout droit*, and, malediction, I have gone more than two miles out of my way."

We told him that we had noticed another road at Stoumont, and bade him drive back there, and bait his poor tired horse.

When we got back to Stoumont we found that the refreshment house stands at the angle of the other road, which goes steeply down hill into the valley beside the river. While we enjoyed the prospect, our driver sulkily fed his horse with slices of black bread, which we made him do, and then we discovered that he had had money given him for this, but he had tried to avoid spending it. At some distance from Stoumont the valley narrows, and the drive becomes most lovely. On one side is a wood, through which one drives over a terribly bad road; and on the other the river, at the foot of very lofty and rocky hills. Every now and then these opened into a gorge of deep sombre purple, with the silver flash of a stream hurrying over a stony bed to the river. About four miles below Stoumont we came to a strangely stony part of the Amblève. The valley is somewhat wider, but the stream is encumbered with masses of rock. It looks as

if blocks from some neighbouring quarry had been flung down, almost choking the water. This is called Le Fonds des Quarreux, and a marvellous legend tells its origin.

LE FONDS DES QUARREUX.

Once upon a time a miller dwelt beside the Amblève, on the spot where the Fonds des Quarreux or Coireux begins. He had a devoted wife and six children, and he would have been a happy and prosperous man but

for the vagaries of the river Amblève. Sometimes it came rushing along with such force that it damaged the mill-wheel by hurling huge stones against its sides, and then work had to be stopped while this was repaired; sometimes it chose only to come trickling along a slender stream in the middle of its bed, so that the mill-dam could not fill and the wheel remained idle. Still, in spite of the river's tricks, the miller led a happy life.

It was a hot, dry summer, and the mill had been idle for a fortnight. One of the children was ill, and the miller could not pay a doctor; and, although she did not complain, he knew that his wife wanted clothes, both for herself and her little ones. To-night she had urged him to tell her what ailed him, and he had angrily bade her leave him in peace.

Long after all were gone to bed he sat alone by himself on a little hillock at the back of the mill.

The night was dark, though it was summer time—very dark and still—only every now and then the weird hoot of some owl sounded from the rocks behind him.

"There was never so unlucky a mortal as I am," said the miller. "I would give my life—ay, and more than that—if I could work my mill as I ought. 'Tis a devil of a shame I am served so."

There was not a sound or a movement, and yet the miller felt his hair rise on his head. Just then he heard a low chuckle beside him. He turned round, and, spite of the darkness, he saw there was some one close by him—some one dressed in black velvet, it seemed, from top to toe; even his stockings were black, and he showed no white linen either at his collar or at his wrists.

"Who the devil are you?" said the miller.

The visitor laughed in a chuckling fashion. "Gently, gently, my dear friend, there's many a truth spoken in jest," he said; "but I was thinking of you, poor friend, and I am anxious to clear this troubled look from your eyes. Tell me, what is your trouble?"

It did not seem to the miller as if he made any reply, for his heart was too heavy with long-pent-up sorrow to unburden itself without an effort; and, besides, his usual reserve increased the difficulty. To his surprise, the strange visitor answered just as if he had uttered his sorrowful thoughts.

"Your mill cannot work regularly because of the caprices of the river, and you fear to see your wife and children starve before your eyes. True, my excellent friend, that is exactly what they must do unless I come to your assistance—starve is the very word. One by one, you will see them perish miserably before your eyes."

There is a pause, and again the miller tries to speak. It seems to him that he has not even unclosed his lips, and yet—here is the answer to the question in his mind.

"How can this be avoided? you say. Easily. Listen. I have so great a regard for you, so much sympathy for the manful way in which you have striven against the fate that persecutes you, that I promise to build you at once a mill which shall grind always, let the river be full or empty. How say you? Shall I do it? Yes or no?"

There is a longer pause this time, and as the miller looks at his visitor, he sees that his eyes gleam like red fire, and that they are riveted on his own face. At last he speaks.

"I am sure you are very obliging," says the poor man. "But, of course, that is my side of the bargain; now what is yours? I was not born yesterday, and I understand well enough you are not going to do this for my sake alone."

The fierce eyes gleam redder than ever, and the strange visitor moves restlessly.

"I am sorry to find you so suspicious, my friend," he says, in a soft, cajoling voice; "but I do not lay the blame on you. It is the fault of your ill-luck. Ill-luck will sour a man towards his best friends. I care so much for you, that not only do I do this for your sake

alone, but I desire and intend always to look after you. Yes; so strong a regard have I for your soul, that, unlike those who have placed you here and then left you to perish, I wish you to belong to me always, and to sign your name to guarantee your sympathy in my wish, and to show that the new mill is yours."

This proposal does not alarm the miller; on the contrary, it seems to him a reasonable idea.

"I will give you three days to consider my terms," says the mysterious man in black velvet; "and if you will meet me here on the third night from this, I will bring the paper for you to sign. *Au revoir.*"

The miller rubbed his eyes and looked around. His visitor was not there; had it all been a dream? Just then the cock in the shed outside the mill crowed loudly.

The miller shuddered.

"It was not a dream," he said; "and I will not come here again."

He went home and to bed, but he could not sleep. A storm had risen, and the noise of the rushing river and the crashing of boughs was enough to keep him waking. He tossed about, moaned and uttered strange words. Long before dawn he roused, to find his wife standing beside his bed, looking at him fixedly.

"What ails thee, Martin?" she said. "Thou hast

been disturbed by ill dreams. Thou hast been saying strange words. Whom dost thou know in black velvet with fiery eyes, my friend?"

She laughed, but the poor woman meant no harm by her little jest. She so loved and honoured this dear husband of hers, that the idea of scoffing at him could not have entered her head.

She was terrified when her husband sprang out of bed, crying, "Curse thee, hold thy tongue, thou prying idiot! Meddle not with what is no concern of thine. Maybe the storm has worked our ruin."

Now the miller's wife was as pious as she was loving, and it grieved her doubly when her husband so spoke to her. Moreover, she noticed that when he left his chamber, after hastily flinging on his clothes, he did not sign himself as he passed the little *bénitier* of holy water beside the door.

But as she sat at breakfast, with her children round her, the miller rushed in, with a face pale with terror. He almost foamed as he spoke.

"Yes, eat," he said, "eat while you can," and he looked despairingly round him. "Much good may your meal do you! you will perhaps not have many more. This cursed storm has ruined me."

The children looked frightened: they had never

heard their father speak so, and the youngest, startled by the angry voice, began to cry loudly.

The miller swore at it, and bade his wife "take the squalling brat away."

But she, clasping the baby in her arms, soothed its fears.

"Thou art hungry, dear husband," she said sadly; "everything looks crooked to a hungry man."

She spoke so gently, and looked so kind, that a cloud seemed to roll from the miller's troubled soul. He kissed his wife, and sat down to his breakfast. He tried to forget that he had found his wheel destroyed, and that it would take all the money he possessed to get a new one. He even patted his baby on the head, and kissed the cheek of the little sick boy, and firmly resolved not to think of his strange visitor.

But that night a yet more fearful storm came rushing up the valley. The house rocked and swayed to and fro as if it meant to follow the wind up the Amblève. Huge branches were whirled from the trees, and one of them struck the mill-house and sent its chimney flying into the wild wreck that was forming outside. Long before morning the miller had risen, and was vainly trying to make out the extent of the mischief. Presently his wife came to him with a pale face.

"I fear dear little Jacques is going," she said: "the storm has frightened away his life."

While she spoke it had grown lighter, and the miller, whose eyes were fixed on the square hole through which the wheel used to be visible, saw that the river was now full of water, and that planks and other relics of the mill were floating along with it. He leant over and looked down. The fury of the storm had driven such a shoal of stones against the house that its side was crushed in. Did the water gurgle, or what was it that sounded like a low laugh beside him?

His silence pained his wife—till now he had always been so fond of little Jacques.

"Husband," she said gravely, "did you not hear?—our little Jacques is passing away."

"The better for him," he said bitterly. "Tell him I am coming."

When he followed his wife, the child was better, and sleeping quietly, and the miller told her roughly that she had magnified the illness.

But he looked at the child with a blank despairing face.

"How can he recover or grow strong without food?" he thought. "And I cannot get a new wheel, and I

have no money to pay any one to help me to repair my mill. I must go to the rock."

He turned away, and his wife did not see him again till supper-time. Then he was silent and gloomy, and went to bed earlier than usual.

He soon fell asleep, but his wife lay awake, musing over the change in her husband. It seemed to her that even his face had altered into a constant frown. Of course the mischief the storm had caused was enough to make him sad; but then, "God sent the storm," she said, "so there is no one to be angry with."

On this she fell asleep, but all at once she awakened —her husband was talking loudly.

"To-morrow night—yes—yes. I will come," he said. "I will sign, I tell you—yes, yes—I will do anything you wish. I will sign my soul away."

The poor woman was so frightened that she sat up and shook her husband's arm violently, but she could not waken him. However, as he seemed now to be sleeping peacefully, she did not persist. Instead, she rose up softly, and kneeling down, she prayed that, if this were more than a troubled dream, her husband might escape the snares of the Evil One.

When morning came she said nothing to her husband, but she carefully watched him all day.

In the evening after supper he bade her not wait up for him. "I have work to do," he said. "Go to sleep as fast as you can," and he patted her on the shoulder.

She lay down, but she did not take her clothes off; and, as she expected, very soon she heard the house door open and close behind her husband.

She quickly followed him. The trees clothed the rock behind the house from top to bottom, but she knew how to find her way among them without noise; and, indeed, the wind was still so boisterous that the noise the river made as it hurried along was more like that of a torrent than of the usually sparkling little Amblève.

All at once, through the tumult, she heard voices, and she saw through the bushes that she was close to a bare rock with a projecting spur in front of it. There was light here, and she saw that her husband stood on the spur of rock, and that a man whose back was towards her was holding him a paper on which the miller was marking his name.

The poor woman wrung her hands in sore anguish —she was too late.

"In four days," said a strange voice, which made her shiver with sudden terror, "the new mill shall be ready for use; but, thanks to your foolish wife, there is this

condition, if on the fourth day the cock crows before the sails of the mill go round, then the contract is void, and you are free."

The miller's wife had listened greedily, but at this she slipped away among the bushes, and when her husband came home she was seemingly sound asleep.

The next night, as soon as it was dark, there was such a noise as never was heard—the clink of trowels, sawing, timber-beams falling, the crashing of loads of bricks—all the hubbub that attends building when it is being done with extra speed—but no voices.

The miller's wife could not rest. She left her husband sleeping; she crept softly downstairs, and looked out, and lo! not a stone's throw from the old mill, there was another rising from its foundations as fast as you can wink your eyes. She stole softly inside the building, and saw that it was full of busy workers, with the Evil One towering above all and directing their labours.

The miller looked more and more cheerful each day as he saw the progress of the new mill. He said no word to his wife about it, and he made no effort to free the old wheel, but stood, with his hands in his pockets, examining the advance that each night's work had wrought in the building.

When he went to bed on the third night he could

nowhere find his wife. She had put the children to bed, and then she had disappeared.

However, the miller was too excited with the thought of what the morrow would bring forth to heed her absence as he would once have done. He went to bed and slept heavily.

He wakened very early and hastened out of doors. There stood the new mill, its bright sails glistening in the rising sun; but what was this?—they were motionless. As he drew near, he saw his strange visitor standing in the doorway.

"What does this mean?" the dark man said in a harsh grating voice. "Why does not the mill work?"

Even as he spoke, the cock crew. A violent thunder-clap shook the valley, and the Evil One vanished with a howl of disappointment; and then there came a crash of destruction, and the new mill with all its stones and planks and rafters toppled over and fell into the bed of the river. Something human fell with it, for between its sails was found the body of the faithful wife who had thus devoted herself to save her husband's soul. Ever since the river has been cumbered as it now is at Le Fonds des Quarreux.

The river struggles vehemently against this obstruction, and makes numerous little cascades as it boils and

foams over the masses of rock. We pass a little village, Sedoz, near which is the waterfall called La Chaudière, and then Nonceveux, where another small river falls into the Amblève through a dark cleft in the lofty hill. It is impossible, without repetition, to give an idea of the constant beauty and excitement of this drive. Each moment, from the winding course of the stream, there is some change, some fresh call on our admiration. Our drive had lasted more than eighteen miles, counting in the four we had gone astray; and, though we were hungry, we were not at all tired of it.

Now we reached a broader, smoother road, still beside the river. There is a new and shorter road across the hill, with a fine view of Remouchamps in the distance, but our driver drove very fast along the lower one. We had more than once passed and been passed by a two-horse carriage, with a gentleman and two ladies inside, evidently Belgians; but this carriage, from the time we passed Nonceveux, kept in front, and drove at such a pace, that our horse went along, in sheer imitation, double as fast as he had gone through the journey. The gentleman kept on urging his driver to greater speed, looking back at us now and then; but as we had written beforehand to Madame Carpentier, the landlady, to order a room at the hotel, we did not

feel anxious about this precedence, only we regretted the rapid driving, as it disturbed full enjoyment of the scenery.

All at once, among the trees that clothe the opposite bank, rose the gray towers of an old château, built on the very edge of the steep wood-clothed rock, with a modern château built beside it. Below was the clear brown water, and beyond the narrow strip of green meadow which borders this near side of the Amblève is the charming village of Remouchamps.

The carriage in front of us had got considerably ahead, and when, turning a corner, we came in sight of the whitewashed vine-clad inn of Remouchamps, we saw the vehicle drawn up in front of the entrance, with only the two ladies inside. When we went up the steps into the little inn, a tall young woman with a very perplexed face was protesting to the gentleman that only one room had been ordered.

I went forward and asked if the room I had written for was ready, and at once the tall young woman's face cleared.

"Ah," she said, "it is Madame, then, who has written! I told this gentleman there must be some mistake, when he said he must have two rooms, and we have only one free."

The Belgian scowled darkly at me, and at once retreated; but if we had been five minutes later he would no doubt have taken possession of our room on false pretences, though it had been kept for us for two days. We watched him drive to the other inn, and we heard that, finding no room there, the poor creatures had to go on to Spa, another ten miles, to seek a lodging.

The tall young woman, who proved to be the landlady's eldest daughter, called to her aid two more tall young women, so like her that plainly they were her sisters, and bade them take our luggage upstairs. Then she showed us into a large airy bedroom with windows on two sides; and, as the house stands at an angle with the road, we thus got a double view of the Amblève. It was delightful to sit at the window and gaze at the view. At this point the road follows the river, and runs between it and our inn. A little brook —really the same which disappears mysteriously at Adseux—flows through the grotto of Remouchamps and falls into the river just across the road; and there are two little plank bridges, one across the brook and another over the stony bank beyond, before one can reach the flat green strip of meadow that borders the Amblève. Sheep are feeding here, and on a little green island in the midst of the stream some brown

cows are grazing. The bank opposite is bordered by osiers, with white-stemmed birches and tall poplars here and there. The lovely river sweeps down to us in a broad curve, leaving shadow behind it beneath the steep hill. It comes sparkling over its stones, the water so transparent that we see them many-coloured in its bed. About a furlong off on the left, from among tall forest trees that here clothe the steep cliff, are the towers of the old château of Mont Jardin, the pointed black-capped roofs rising high above the trees.

As we look on this lovely scene, one of our host's neat daughters goes across the road with a bright carafe in each hand, to fill them from the brook, and the glass is as clouded when she comes back with them as though the water was iced. On our right is the village of Remouchamps, with its gray church at the farthest end—really in a sort of second village, called Sougnies. Behind the village, and extending on for some distance, is a wall of high hills, among which is the Heid des Gattes, a group of huge black rocks towering above the rest. The river, as it flows along with osier-crowned banks and small green islets gemming its sudden curves, is continuous in beauty.

There is a *table d'hôte* at the Hôtel des Étrangers, at one and at seven, but it is far more agreeable to

CHÂTEAU MONT-JARDIN, REMOUCHAMPS.

have dinners separately in what is called the private room. We found that the chief part of this inn is taken every year by two large families, cousins—a mother with six children, chiefly schoolboys, and a young couple with two babies and a single brother and sister; and although they seemed pleasant and cultivated people, still a family party of such dimensions is fatiguing at every meal.

The young mother and her sister spoke English easily; and so anxious was the mother that her children should do the like, that she insisted that no one should speak to her little girl, aged two years, except in English. The father, a barrister of Liège—who looked clever and over-worked—though supposed to be enjoying his summer holiday, was forbidden by Madame to speak to his little shy silent child except in English, which he evidently accomplished with difficulty. The young mother was rather pretty, but she never smiled, and persisted in talking English with such a detestable accent that it was impossible often to understand her. She explained to us that she preferred English to any other language; that she was of Brussels—it was easy to see that she looked down on Liège—and that she was determined her children should speak English as well as she did, and while

they were young they should never be spoken to in their own language. We asked if she had an English nurse.

"Oh no. I intend them also to speak German; so they have a German maid who knows no other language. As she gets older, I shall have my little girl taught by the English governess who taught me, and the result will be the same."

Listening to the accent of these words, the result did not seem worth striving for, considering the punishment evidently inflicted on father and child. The poor man could kiss and pet his child, but he had scarcely any power of speaking English, and certainly had no endearing words at command. We wondered whether the poor little silent creature, who seemed to shrink from its German nurse, would miss all the baby words and nursery talk of happy little ones allowed to speak their native tongue. Was it this want in her own babyhood that made the mother so grave in look and repressive in manner? However, it was a relief when, presently going outside, we found the maid who only spoke German dandling the bonny baby, a big merry boy about a year old, and chattering French, or rather Walloon French, with one of the daughters of the inn. There are six of these daughters, tall, clear-skinned young women, very like one another. They do all

the work of the house among them, and keep no servants. This sounds well, and looks patriarchal; but as there is little method or division of labour, arrangements are somewhat scrambling, and we thought it would have been more comfortable if a couple of regular servants had been kept to help these amateurs. The landlady, their mother—a nice woman—seems to be a cripple, and sits all day long at a vine-wreathed window, looking out on the river.

It is certainly a lovely scene to gaze out on. Wherever one turns at Remouchamps one sees beauty; and when I climbed the heights behind the village, especially on the way to Nonceveux, the view was surpassingly lovely. Again and again, as one traces the course of the valley, does the Amblève appear in always varied curves, sometimes gliding quietly in deep brown shadow, then glittering with a diamond-like brilliance, or else, when barred by the gray stones in its bed, foaming in angry cascades, and dashing round the feet of the wooded cliffs. I fear to say how many times one can see the sparkling little river from one of these heights; and the air is unusually fresh and invigorating, far better than in the village itself, where in hot weather it is rather relaxing. The time to visit Remouchamps, and, indeed, the

Ardennes generally, is either spring or summer; their charms are too much appreciated by holiday-making Belgians to be quite comfortable in August and September, though we heard that in fine weather October is a good month for them. The pension at Remouchamps is six francs a day.

The famous grotto of Remouchamps is close to the Hôtel des Étrangers—it is another of the stalactite caverns for which this region is celebrated. We were told, however, that it is so very dirty that it is necessary to put on a costume kept at the hotel to protect one's clothes. People often come over from Spa, and we used to see them crossing over to the grotto, clad in brown-holland long narrow garments, with a pointed hood for the head, looking as if they were ready to walk in some penitential procession through the village. As Remouchamps is one of the sights to be seen from Spa, visitors come daily therefrom to explore the grotto.

There is a large courtyard behind the inn, with wide-open doors at its farther end, and these frame in a study for an artist. On the farther side of the lane which runs behind the yard is an open *grenier*, its broken bars standing out yellow against the deep shadow within. Beside it, a flight of crumbling moss-and-grass-grown stone steps leads up to the inn garden, shaded by a

INN-YARD AND GARDEN, REMOUCHAMPS.

huge walnut-tree; gay nasturtium blossoms clothe the top of the wall which supports this raised garden, and over them is a bar, on which blue and white petticoats hang out to dry in the sunshine.

All day long, among the gold-flecked straw and brown refuse under the *grenier*, a group of hens and chicks, and their master, Monsieur le Coq, enjoy themselves. Now and then the Sultan in feathers stands gazing at his offspring with wondering pride, or a fussy mother shelters her brood from what she thinks means danger.

The morning after our arrival proved rainy, and, sitting at our window, we saw drawn up beneath it the strangest-looking vehicle. It was like pictures one sees of the old-fashioned French diligence; it was painted blue, red, and green. It looked like a house on wheels, and had three doors—one to each of the front compartments, and one at the back; a ladder was fixed behind, reaching to the roof—the horse had been taken out—it was evidently there for a rest. A jaunty-looking man, in Hessian boots and a blouse, with white shirt-sleeves, stood near this sort of caravan, smoking. He was as thin as possible, and had dark narrow eyes with a curve in them—that reminded one irresistibly of a snake—a hooked nose, and a crafty, cruel-looking mouth, which showed

plainly under his long, thin, waxed moustaches. He soon finished his cigar, and, going into the machine, came out of it again with a fishing-rod; after fitting this together, he went down to the river, and soon strolled out of sight along the green strip of meadow. He was exactly like the Frenchman so vividly described by Dickens in "Little Dorrit," and I felt sure that if one went close to him one would see his eyebrows and the rest of his features go through the contortions exhibited by Monsieur Montbard.

In the afternoon the rain cleared, and we saw a girl fantastically dressed come out of the cart and go down to the river. She had two pretty little black dogs with her, and we imagined that probably the man was a travelling showman, and that these were dancing dogs. My curiosity was aroused, and I went down to the water-side; one of the dogs barked at me so furiously that the girl called him off. Then I saw that she was sitting close to the brink of the water, washing a pair of men's shoes with a brush and a bit of soap. She wore a sort of black velvet coronet, with a tinsel-gilt star in it.

I asked her if her dogs could dance. She shook her head with much dignity.

"But no—what should I do with dancing dogs?" she said. "I keep them for my amusement."

I begged pardon for my mistake, and explained that I had thought that their carriage was like that of a giver of entertainments.

She shook her head; but she smiled, and seemed anxious to talk, so I seated myself on the grass near her.

She told me that she lived with her father in the caravan, and that he had travelled in it all the way from Paris in the exercise of his profession.

"Ah, then, you come from Paris!" I felt sure she was French from the purity of her accent.

"Oh yes," she said, with a toss of her head. "These people are barbarians, and they speak jargon." She turned round and stared hard at me. There were traces of rouge on her poor little withered face. She could not have been more than twenty, but she must have had a pinched, wizened expression from her cradle, and her eyes peering inquisitively at me from under her rough sandy hair looked as if she had nearly cried them away—the poor little creature had a most pathetic face.

She asked me what country I belonged to; and when she heard I was English she began a string of questions about England. At last she said she had heard that the costume of the people in England was very good, and asked me to describe it.

I felt ashamed, but was obliged to confess that in this respect my country was inferior to any I had ever visited. At this she sighed, and said she had thought England would be a good country for them to travel in. "We have to travel," she said, "for my father's profession." She left off scrubbing the shoe, and looked at me with a half-inquiring, half-dignified expression. I inquired the nature of her father's "profession."

"He is a dentist," she said. "Dentists always travel, you know. In the winter we live in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris. My father is a well-known and scientific man, and in the summer we travel to places not so fortunate as to possess dentists. Do you live in London, Madame? and is that your gentleman who sits drawing at yon window?"

She then questioned me minutely as to my acquaintance with London dentists, and I told her that I knew very few.

"Ah!" she sighed; "then perhaps you will not have heard of my father even in Paris. You have never heard, I fancy, of the famous Dr. ——." She said some name beginning with H, which I have forgotten, but she asserted her father's fame so seriously, that I could not make out whether she believed what she

was saying, or whether she was consciously trying to deceive. Just as I was going to ask her about herself and her life, a loud, harsh voice called out:

"Sapristi, thou art washing those shoes to pieces, and the soap too. Give me the soap; I want to soap my dog."

Close beside us was the Frenchman. He had certainly the most fiend-like expression I ever saw, and he glared at his daughter as if he would like to give her a whipping with his fishing-rod.

The poor girl looked painfully abashed by her father's anger, and I rose hastily and went away, for he glared at me so savagely that he evidently thought I had been wasting his daughter's time.

Looking back, I saw him standing over her, shaking his fist and pointing first to the soap, which she had certainly rubbed almost away during our talk, and then to a huge and very dirty poodle, whose appearance was of a mountebank character. The man seemed like the Serpent in Eden. There was the soft green strip of meadow, the clear river murmuring over its gray stones, and the brook trickling down a tributary stream, and across the water and beyond its osier-shaded island the towers of Mont Jardin were gleaming among the dark trees. Warm sunshine glowed over all, and the grass and leaves shone with the freshness brought by the

morning's rain; and yet all the sweet charm of its perfect repose had left the lovely spot while that fierce-eyed, hungry-faced man stood beside the river, threatening the girl — she shrinking from him, with an abject cowardly expression, that made one feel heart-sick.

It is a charming walk beside the river to Aywaille, across the new bridge, and then by the old church of Dieupart, in itself very interesting. Aywaille is a more important place than Remouchamps, and we heard that it has a better inn; but it is not picturesque.

It was a great change to come back from its stony little streets to the long line of scattered irregular houses beside the river, with the gray church on a knoll of rising ground at one end, and the vine-clad inn at the other, Mont Jardin on its wooded cliff rising high on the opposite side.

It was Saturday evening, and we heard at supper-time that the dentist had found himself so disappointed at the sound state of the teeth of the people at Remouchamps that he had gone back to Spa, and on looking out of the window we saw that the travelling house had departed.

Early next morning the loud beat of a drum announced that something was going forward near the

church, and my companion went to the other end of the village.

The church is built on a knoll of ground planted with trees and walled below, and drawn up beside this wall was the dentist's travelling house. A man in a blouse stood on the step of it with anxious face, stretching up his head so as to whisper to the dentist, who, dressed in black as to waistcoat and breeches—for he was in shirt-sleeves—his spotless white shirt, with an enormous frill and large cuffs, with large gold studs, Hessian boots shining like mirrors, and a huge cocked hat on his head—stood on the little platform in front of his vehicle. The man seemed in haste as he whispered his request. The doctor stood leaning his chin on his hand, his elbow resting on his booted leg stuck up on the rail of the platform. He paid no attention to his patient's wish for secrecy, but shouted at the top of his voice, and looked round, as if addressing an audience: "Yes, yes, my friend, good—good—I will be with you in an hour or less, and will do all you require; all will be well." The man got down, evidently greatly comforted, and ran away to give his message. The drum now began to beat in a most deafening manner, and by twos and threes the villagers of Remouchamps hurried to the spot. On the top of the caravan was

the girl, dressed in a gorgeous red robe and gold-spangled turban, beating the drum furiously. All at once she caught sight of the Englishman. She flung down her drumsticks, tore off her scarlet robe, and began to get down the ladder behind the vehicle.

"*Sacré!* what are you about?" yelled the dentist. "Go on with the drum."

"I have finished," she said. "I shall beat no more."

The father swore roundly; but the girl got down, and went silently to the rail of the little bridge, motionless and absolutely dumb.

Later on I went to high mass, but as I went round by the lane behind the village I did not see the carriage. When I came out with the congregation the drum was beating violently, and, coming down hill towards the river, I saw the dentist standing on the platform, and on the top of the caravan my friend in her red gown and golden turban, beating as for very life.

She saw me, and instantly turned away her head; but she had evidently been obliged to conquer her scruples, for she went on drumming away till the crowd that gathered round was too dense to move in. I had escaped to its fringe, but was still near enough to hear the dentist address his audience, when he at last clapped his hands and bade the drum cease.

"Gentlemen," he said in excellent French, with the accent of an educated man, "you have come to listen to me to-day, and I promise you something worth hearing. I address myself to all of you: gentlemen of the gallery,"—he raised his hat and bowed to the crammed windows of the houses on the hill,—"to you of the pit,"—he waved his arm sweepingly to the low wall round the churchyard on his right, which was thronged with men in blouses,—"but,"—here he lowered his voice and bent forward impressively over the crowd nearest the platform,—"specially to you, my friends, in the stalls; you have struggled to be near, that you may treasure and carry home my words. You may say, some of you, Who is this that has come among us?—an adventurer, a know-nothing, who will sell us nostrums, and empty our pockets to fill his own." He stopped, and looked all round him. "That is a mistake," he said slowly. "I do not come here to sell, but to give my medicine away." He paused, for there was a murmur in the crowd. He fumbled in his pocket, and produced a small pomade pot. "A small portion of this, my friends, only as much as would cover a half-franc piece, has effected a miraculous cure in this place only this morning; and yet this healing balm I am ready to give—to give freely away to any man or woman among you who shall

consult me about a stiff leg or a crooked back, or even a humped shoulder. Aha, my friends, what say you?"

He began to place on a little shelf in front of him several glass bottles, with most curious-looking creatures in them, seemingly preserved in spirits. But he could not be silent long; his flow of speech and of well-rounded sentences was extraordinary.

"Many of you will say,"—he gave a glance of dignified pity at the men in blouses, some of whom had begun to smile—'This gentleman has a remedy for every disease.'" He paused, and glanced his hawk-eyes over the crowd; then, raising his pointed forefinger, with a nail like the claw of a cat,—"The remedy that I have is not for every disease, but for a few—and"—here came a pause—"it is infallible. There are maladies"—he gave another grand sweep with his arm—"about which I do not trouble myself. I might cure them, or I might not. Simply, I have not tried. I confine myself to five; the first is rheumatism; the second is feebleness in the limbs; the third is paralysis; the fourth is the lungs; and the fifth I shall explain by and by in reference to these bottles on my table." He paused here, and the girl beat the drum vehemently.

But I had grown tired of standing, and, judging by his glibness, it seemed possible that he might hold

forth for hours. One old countryman close to the platform had been for some time, with his blouse tucked up, fumbling in his pockets. Now he held out a piece of silver, and asked for one of the precious remedies.

The quack clapped his hands and laughed, appealing to the bystanders to admire the faith of this disciple. "My friend," he said, "I will not take your money till I have earned it; you shall consult me after the lecture, and then, if the remedy suits your case, you shall have it."

I thought, as I went home by the side of the river, that probably before the afternoon was over he would fleece many of these simple-faced men and women, who seemed quite carried away by his eloquence.

He and his daughter departed from the village at nightfall. Probably he appeared more evil than he really was, or the girl would not stay with him. Certainly he looked capable of murdering any one who thwarted his will.

There are several excursions to be made from Remouchamps—to the Château d'Amblève, to Spa, or, for those who have not explored the valley of the Amblève, to Stoumont and to Coo; but the village itself is so abundant in walks and lovely scenery, that we felt no inclination to leave its close neighbourhood during our visit.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VALLEY OF THE AMBLÈVE TO COMBLAIN-AU-PONT.

WE were truly sorry to leave Remouchamps, in spite of the table d'hôte of schoolboys, and the sad face of the baby who must speak English; though really the schoolboys behaved admirably, and the baby was interesting; but we had already lingered too long. So we started one sunny afternoon for Comblain in another of the curious little carriages which can always be had in the Ardennes. We had a stout little Ardennais pony, and a bright-eyed intelligent driver, who, almost as soon as we had started, turned round and informed us he had been in England, and that he liked English people.

"They know what is beautiful, they are a great nation." He shrugged his shoulders. "Ah, I should think so;" and he drove on.

We passed the old church of Dieu-Part, about which, and the Château of Montjardin, there is a curious legend. The image of the Blessed Virgin on the side

altar of the old church is said to be the veritable image of the legend.

LEGEND OF NOTRE-DAME DE DIEU-PART.

Many years ago, so many that no one can say exactly when the change took place, the Château of Montjardin, instead of looking down from its wooded hill on the village of Remouchamps, stood on a hill much nearer to Aywaille, which, as every one knows, is a post-town about three kilomètres west of Remouchamps. Instead of being a pleasant domestic-looking building, like the Montjardin of to-day, it was a dark fortress, and its master, the Seigneur of Montjardin, was the greatest tyrant of the country; and, believe me, this is saying a good deal, for in those days there was not much to choose among any of the barons of the Ardennes. They were all alike bandits and marauders, and those who possessed land near the Amblève were about the worst. But this lord of Montjardin is said to have been worst of all. No poor man's cow or sheep, no rich man's wife or daughter, was safe from him.

At last, by some evil chance, he saw in the convent garden at Remouchamps the most beautiful girl he had ever beheld.

He disguised himself like an old beggar woman,

and, bent nearly double, he went and asked for alms at the convent gate. The portress, Sister Seraphina, was a soft-hearted, querulous old lay sister, who loved to hear news of the outside world, and was willing in return to tell all the good she could about the reverend Mother Abbess and the "sweet lambs," as she called the sisters and the novices. The sham beggar groaned with pain, she said it was in her back and limbs, and compassionate Sister Seraphina offered her own rush-bottomed chair for the mendicant to rest on while she ate the slice of bread, the convent dole.

"Come," said Seraphina, "you must tell me where you have been and what you have seen. Have you ever got so far as the good city of Liège, and seen our holy Prince-Bishop?"

"I have seen him many's the time," croaked the beggar; "but bishops, though they be holy, are none so compassionate as fair ladies; *they* always pity my suffering—the fairer the kinder. Is it not so among your lambs, good mother?"

Sister Seraphina was startled by this question, but next minute she blamed herself for evil suspicions. No doubt the beggar had seen better days, she argued, and this made her conversation different from that of others of her class.

"I am not so sure," she said; "but yes, truly our blessed Sister Agnes is the most beautiful of all and the kindest. Ah me! she has a tender heart. She loves everything, great and small, and especially the flowers. Our reverend mother gives her sole charge to gather the altar flowers for our high festivals."

"That is not much of a charge," said the beggar. "Your Sister Agnes has but to go in the garden, snip off the blossoms with her scissors, and put them in the church."

The portress had grown excited at this disparagement.

"You are altogether mistaken, my good woman," she said, severely. "Sister Agnes has to choose out the different flowers to suit the several altars in our church, and all must be ready for compline on the eve of a festival. It takes time for this. She will often be away from collation, the blessed lamb, straying among her flowers, while all the rest are eating and drinking. If you could but see how beautiful she is!"

"Can you not let me see her in the chapel?" said the sham mendicant. "I love to look on beautiful things though I am only a poor beggar. I should love to see this beautiful Sister Agnes."

All at once it occurred to Seraphina that she was talking rather freely to an utter stranger.

"I think you have rested long enough, my good woman," she said, in the austere tone which she had copied from the Mother Abbess, who often had to rebuke her portress for gossip; "and I must ask you to let me have my chair again."

The baron had learned as much as he wanted. He thanked Seraphina very humbly, and departed.

On the eve of the next festival—the legend does not tell us which it was—when all the sisters came to bid their reverend Mother good-night, Sister Agnes was not among them. After some inquiry, it came out that she had not been seen since she went into the garden to gather the altar flowers.

"She may have been taken ill in the garden," said the Abbess; "run quickly and seek her there."

But the reverend Mother's heart was heavy; and when the terrified sisters came in, open-mouthed, telling how they had taken a lantern to look, and had found the flowers indeed scattered on the ground, but no Sister Agnes, she could scarcely hide her terror. Finding that she could not quiet her ruffled flock of lambs, she sent them off to bed, and spent the night in prayer for her beloved Agnes.

Meantime the baron's messengers, who had scaled the wall of the garden, had swooped on their prey so

suddenly, that Agnes had no time to cry out before her mouth was muffled, and she was carried off on horseback behind one of the ruffians to the Tower of Montjardin.

When the baron saw her he was maddened by her beauty. He told her he had never seen any woman so lovely; but Agnes would not even look at him. She did nothing but weep, and when she spoke, it was only to beg him to release her.

"Be mine," he said, "beautiful one. Once you have tasted the sweets of love you will be content to dwell at Montjardin."

But Agnes turned her back on him, and prayed to Heaven for help.

The baron was not accustomed to resistance, and he soon grew tired of humouring the nun's "childish scruples," as he called them. He told Agnes that she was in his power, that there was no one in the castle but men like those who had brought her there, and that her resistance was useless. He grasped her arm; but, instead of crying out, the timid maiden put her hand into the folds of her robe, and drawing forth an image of Our Lady, she held it out to the baron. For an instant this monster hesitated and let go his hold; he stood gazing with an awe-stricken face at the holy image, then he dashed it fiercely to the ground, and again

snatched at his victim. All at once there came a terrific peal of thunder, the castle of Montjardin rocked from side to side, and fell a mass of ruins, overwhelming all that it contained.

Years passed away. It was thought impious to rebuild the château, even near the site where Heaven had so signally taken vengeance, and the new Château of Montjardin was built upon the hill beyond Remouchamps.

It chanced one evening that two shepherds were groping in the ruins of the old castle. All at once the eldest found, in a hole which his companion had made, a small image. Looking closely at it, he saw that it was a figure of the Blessed Virgin. He gave an outcry of surprise, and held it out to his companion.

"It is the Virgin of Sister Agnes," said the younger one. "How the fire of Heaven has blackened and scorched it." They both examined it carefully, and decided that it was no other than the sacred image which had saved the nun from the baron.

"Well, it is mine," said the elder shepherd. "Give it me to take home to my cottage."

"It is as much mine as yours," said the other. "If I had not scraped the hole you would never have found the image."

The strife grew hot, and they agreed to refer it to

the curé, whom they found sitting under an old oak tree. He listened to their story, and then he carefully examined the blackened treasure.

"The blessed image belongs neither to one nor the other," he said. "It is la Part de Dieu, and must be offered to Him."

Very soon a chapel was built, and the image placed therein; and soon the offerings made there caused the building of a church, wherein the holy image was duly enshrined, and in memory of its story the church was called Dieu-Part.

We clatter through the stony streets of Aywaille, and soon after leaving it the valley becomes very beautiful.

On the left the hill rises steeply; but on the right is a low stone wall, making a kind of terrace to the river bordered by gray willow-trees. Above these, on the gray ridge of almost perpendicular rocks across the water, is the ruined Château d'Amblève. It is a most phantom-like ruin, and one is not surprised to learn that it was one of the fastnesses of those legendary heroes, Les quatre fils Aymon, and also in later years a den of the famous Wild Boar of the Ardennes, William de la Marck. These sons of Aymon, King

Pepin, and de la Marck, are ubiquitous in this country. They certainly showed their taste for scenery and for good hunting-ground. Sir Walter Scott has hardly given space to the powerful tyrant William de la Marck in *Quentin Durward.* He appears in this novel more like some ordinary freebooter than the character he takes in the history of his times—a prince before whom all his contemporaries seem to have trembled. A Belgian writer on this subject is indignant with Sir Walter for the manner in which he has dwarfed the proportions of this tremendous tyrant, and also for having represented the people of Liège as speaking German. The La Marcks were also lords of Franchimont, and it is curious that two of the proud Marquises of Franchimont bore the name of Amblève.

But these ruins of Amblève are not only impressive on their first appearance. As the valley turns we get a quite varied view of them, and as distance increases this becomes still more picturesque and beautiful.

Some years ago a number of Protestants scattered about the neighbouring country used to assemble in these ruins every Sunday for service and sermons. It must have been a most impressive place of worship.

Soon the valley narrowed, and through the screen of pale osiers between us and the river we saw that the

high steep cliff opposite was in places bare of trees, and looked as if it had been quarried. A little way on a barge was moored at the foot of the cliff, and we saw a tiny waggon with a red hood come sliding down the steep hill-side.

"It is the quarry," our driver said; "if Madame looks she will see the quarrymen up above." And so we did, and wondered how they could keep a footing on the steep rock. It had a most strange, almost theatrical effect to see through the gray trembling leaves these toy-like waggons sliding, as if by magic, up and down the precipitous rock. But the whole road to Comblain is full of charm; the bold gray rocks are so varied in form, and project so obtrusively, that they make a decided feature, and Comblain itself is a picturesque and well-placed village. At Douxflamme, close by, we at last said a reluctant Good-bye to the lovely Amblève, which here falls into the Ourthe, hurrying northward to join the Meuse. There are two inns at Comblain, and as there is much that can be reached from this point, it is as well to know that the inn now kept by Madame Veuve Renaville Ninane is to be recommended. There is a grotto at Comblain above one of the remarkable rocks near the station. The old ivy-covered church stands on a hill. Hamoir is a station on the Ligne

d'Ourthe, to be reached from Comblain. Near here are the picturesque ruins of Loque, a fastness of the Wild Boar, de la Marck. From the next station, Bomal, the valley of the Aisne and Roche-à-Frêne can be best visited; but the whole of this Ligne d'Ourthe is full of beauty till it reaches Melreux, where the river takes an easterly course to La Roche. There is, moreover, much to admire on the line between Melreux and Marche. Between Barvaux (another station on the Ourthe, above Comblain) and Durbuy the windings of the river are most remarkable. A diligence from Barvaux passes by Durbuy. There is also a charming excursion from Durbuy to Huy, beside the little river Hoyoux. Durbuy is a pretty little town, with an old ruined tower, a quaint old bridge, and a chapel. By the road it is only two miles from Barvaux, but much farther beside the river; which is, however, a charming walk.

Durbuy has evidently been once a more considerable place than it is at present; it seems asleep, but is very peaceful and pleasant, with pretty country all round it, and a comfortable inn. It is just one of those serene out-of-the-way retreats that toilers are glad to refresh themselves in. In fact, the Ardennes abounds with quiet cheap summer retreats, always beside some lovely sparkling river, in the close neighbourhood of

which there are sure to be lofty hills and remnants of the vast forest that gave its name to the romantic and picturesque province. We wished to linger in the valley of the Ourthe ; but, after all, we had seen it in the fulness of its beauty at La Roche, so we set our faces northwards, and started for Esneux, which we had been especially advised to visit.

At Poulseur are some ruins of the old Château de Montfort, and opposite it the ivy-covered tower of the Château de Poulseur. Montfort belonged to the four sons of Aymon, and was besieged by their relentless persecutor Charlemagne.

The line grows more interesting as we approach Esneux ; the river broadens grandly, and makes splendid curves, easily seen, as it takes its way through flat country. At Esneux, however, there is a lofty rock on which the upper half of the town is built. This rock is almost surrounded by the river, which here takes a bend three miles in length. We were told that the best inn was at the top of the hill, and that the best way to reach this was to go up a long flight of steps, as the carriage-road makes a long round. We toiled up these steps, and found the inn, with a large open space in front of it planted with trees. Though we had written beforehand, the landlady

told us the place was so full of holiday people from Liège that she could only give us a small room; and as it was not yet vacant, she asked us to take a walk with her husband, who would show us the view.

We should have liked best to find this for ourselves, but such a pleasant, cheery-faced old man, dressed in white, came forward and repeated his wife's offer, that we resigned ourselves to his guidance. He took us to the very verge of the cliff, whence there is certainly a magnificent view over the Ourthe and the surrounding country. The course of the winding river can be traced for miles both northward and southward; but, after all, it is only a fine extensive view, without any of the tender beauty and the romantic contrasts of sombre valley and sun-sparkled river, with lofty hills and purple gorges, which we had grown used to in the Ardennes. We were in a civilised region again, though, as it proved, without the advantages of civilisation.

"Aha!"—our cheery friend thumped his breast violently—"What do Monsieur and Madame think of this prospect? magnificent, is it not? Had they an idea of what they were coming to see? I expect not; I am sure of it. They have seen nothing so fine before. Where does Monsieur come from?" he said, quickly—perhaps he thought our admiration insufficient.

"We have been seeing beautiful country," Monsieur said; "we come from the Ardennes."

The cheery-faced man flung up both hands so violently that he seemed to be flinging them into the Ourthe.

"The Ardennes!" he said contemptuously. "Pouf! I have heard of it—it is un trou, un vilain trou. Aha! Wait till to-morrow, and the next day, and the next. Monsieur and Madame do not dream of the beauties I shall unfold to them day by day,"—he stood rubbing his hands, and looked questioningly in our faces. "This is Esneux; and there is no such place in the world." He clearly thought he was booking us for a long stay.

"We fear we must go to-morrow morning," said Monsieur.

"Ah! bah! to-morrow morning? impossible! Come one night to Esneux, and leave it the next morning! Mon Dieu! a week will not exhaust its beauties."

He then said he was wanted at home, and perhaps we would find our way back alone.

When we got back to the inn, and saw our room, we were sorry we had not at once gone on to Liège.

We heard music going on, and when we came down to supper at seven, the table was not laid, and a young woman seated at the piano was playing waltzes with all her might to about half a dozen children of all ages,

from six to sixteen, who were dancing in couples round the table. We were very tired, and hungry besides, and this spectacle was neither "grateful nor comforting." Presently two enormously fat women came in, who were evidently friends of the party; one of them was the grandmother of the young ones; then came in the father, a greasy-looking man, probably an épicier of Liège. We had to wait at least half an hour, during which time the waltz-player and the children disarranged the laying of the table as fast as the servant and the son of the landlady laid it. At last supper came—and this was scarcely eatable; while the spoiled children seasoned it with a variety of tricks that seemed to delight the fat épicier and his spouse. They were much worse than our schoolboys of Remouchamps, who were certainly never rude. The poor landlord's son, a very civil young fellow, was greatly troubled, and kept on looking at us, to see how we relished the behaviour of his customers. Certainly we repented that we had followed the advice which had taken us to Esneux.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIÈGE AND THE VALLEY OF THE MEUSE TO NAMUR.

THOUGH it poured with rain next morning, as soon as we possibly could, we started from Esneux, and soon the day cleared into bright sunshine, long before we reached Liège. We saw how splendidly the city is placed, for when the hills open, an immense valley reveals itself, with the city built on the sides and at the foot of a hill at the junction of the Meuse and the Ourthe; a branch of the Meuse is canalised, and thus part of the town is built on islands, as the double stream takes its way through the city. Rising on either bank, tall chimneys, and innumerable factories, give a modern aspect to the scene, and rob Liège of the prestige of its historical associations, for it is now a huge producer of firearms and modern implements.

From the railway station we went straight to the Square d'Avroi, to see the statue of Charlemagne; it is very fine and imposing, and the public garden in

which it stands was delightfully refreshing in the midst of so busy and matter-of-fact a town, and after our railway journey; the flowers were brilliant in colour, and the leaves of the semi-tropical plants were superb.

The view of the city from this square is very good—the church of St. Martin and another church are seen from it, and it seems to be, with the Boulevard beyond it, a favourite resort of the townspeople. In consequence of the recent death of the Bishop of Liège all the churches were closed for private prayer. We went, however, into the Church of St. Jacques, which is not far from the public garden, and has a most quaint Romanesque tower of the twelfth century. The church itself is late Gothic; but it is very rich, and well-proportioned. The stone-carving of the organ case is most remarkable; but we did not see the winding staircase in the nave, fearing to disturb the devotion of several persons present. There is some good stained glass in this church.

We then found our way to the cathedral, and its quiet, grass-grown, tree-shaded Place is strangely impressive in the midst of this manufacturing city. The cathedral is not so interesting outside as St. Jacques is; we could not get inside it.

The church of St. Martin is interesting; it is about the same period as St. Jacques, but far less florid in its

style. Liège is a clean and handsome city, with good streets and shops. We got an excellent and reasonable dinner at the Café de Venise, near the Theatre; and after going through the Passage Lemonnier, an arcade full of shops, we drove to the Place St. Lambert, to see the palace of the Prince-Bishops, now used as the Palais de Justice. It is an impressive building, and the quadrangle—its four sides surmounted by a very lofty slate roof, the whole supported by an arcade of depressed Gothic arches, with granite pillars, richly ornamented with strange figures and devices in blue stone—has a strange and interesting effect. There is a fountain in the centre of the quadrangle of this remarkable palace.

On the Place St. Lambert there stood till the time of the French Revolution the original Cathedral of Liège. East of this is the great market-place, with the Hotel de Ville, once called La Violette, rebuilt three times since its foundation in the eleventh century, but always on the same spot, over the brook Légie, so that the great representative house, where all the interests of the town have been discussed for centuries, conceals beneath it the stream which gave its name to the city. Till the middle of the sixth century the immense and fertile valley in which Liège stands was uninhabited. It chanced one

day that St. Monulphus, Bishop of Tongres, was journeying from Maestricht to Dinant, when he stopped in a great valley, through the whole length of which ran the river Meuse, gemmed with numerous islands, and into which the winding Ourthe came foaming by two or three channels. Only a few cottages showed among trees on the banks of a brook called the Légie, which now bears the name of Ri de Coq Fontaine.

The bishop greatly admired the beauty of the scene.

"One day," he said, seized with the spirit of prophecy, "on this spot will be built a great and powerful city."

And he at once gave orders that a handsome oratory should be built there in honour of SS. Cosmo and Damian. When the chapel was built, a number of pious worshippers came to establish a little colony around it. Many years later the famous St. Lambert, Bishop of Tongres, built himself a cell close to the oratory founded by St. Monulphus, and many of his disciples and friends did the like. Now it happened that St. Lambert had been for some years the dear and trusted friend of Pepin de Herstal, literally the King of France, though he called himself Duc of Austrasia and Mayor of Neustria. But Pepin had fallen into evil ways—he had repudiated his faithful and high-born wife, Plec-

truda, whom we have seen industriously taking care of the horses in the forest of Arden, while her servants slept; and had given himself up to the beautiful Alpaide, who had inspired him with a violent passion. St. Lambert was much troubled, and severely rebuked his friend.

Alpaide's parents, in revenge, set on their son Dodon to spread all kinds of scandal about the good bishop, and St. Lambert's two nephews, Pierre and Andelot, became very angry thereat, and attacked and killed some of Dodon's followers. St. Lambert being deeply grieved at this, severely censured his nephews' conduct.

He used to take long journeys from his cell to Jupille, where King Pepin had a country seat. One day when he arrived, Pepin, or Pippin, as the old chroniclers call him, came out to greet his friend, and without any preface led him into the eating-hall, where a number of Pepin's courtiers and the beautiful Alpaide were seated at table. The bishop drew back, but Pepin insisted that he should take a place at the banquet, upon which, with one accord, the guests rose, and one after another presented to him the drinking-cup. Last of all Alpaide brought it to him, but the holy man refused to take it from her hands; and, filled with indignation at the snare that had been laid for him, he rose from the table and turned to depart.

Pepin pressed him to stay, but the bishop said his conscience would not permit him to hold any intercourse with Alpaide, lest it should be supposed he approved her conduct.

Alpaide was furious, and she determined to ruin the brave bishop, fearing that his influence would prevail over Pepin and prevent the succession of her son to the power of his father; for she had resolved that this son—afterwards the famous Charles Martel—should utterly set aside the children born to Pepin by Plectruda. She prevailed on her brother Dodon, whom some writers call Count d'Avroy, to assist her. He accordingly assembled his followers, and bade them meet him at midnight in the wood of Publemont, which overlooked the valley of the Légie. Lambert, following his usual custom, had risen in the middle of the night, and was praying in his oratory. He was probably praying for the relentless Alpaide. The count and his followers first surrounded the bishop's dwelling, and murdered all his friends and servants; then they broke into the chapel, and slew St. Lambert at the foot of the altar.

It is said that all those concerned in this murder soon after perished miserably. Pepin finally took back Plectruda, and her rival retired into a convent; but Alpaide had her wish; the children of Plectruda were

finally set aside, the bastard Charles Martel, after many years of imprisonment by his stepmother, became governor of Austrasia.

Of course the cruel martrydom of St. Lambert drew shoals of pilgrims to the valley of the Légie. St. Hubert, who succeeded as Bishop of Tongres, also loved the quiet beauty of the place.

The remains of St. Lambert had been secretly buried at Maestricht, but St. Hubert caused them to be brought back to the scene of the murder, and built over them a magnificent church, which he dedicated to the martyr. He also built a church in the valley dedicated to St. Peter, and many ecclesiastical edifices, and before he died he laid the foundations of a grand and beautiful city, which he placed under the patronage of St. Lambert, and which was called from the valley of the Légie, Liège. St. Hubert too obtained permission from the Holy See to change the seat of the diocese from Tongres to Liège, and the name changed with it, so that the successors of the favourite saint of the Ardennes were called Bishops of Liège.

But the city seems to have suffered from the Northern invasion; and it was Notger, Prince-Bishop of Liège in the tenth century, who erected it into an independent state, and established its temporal pros-

perity, so that the people of Liège say they owe "Notger to Christ, but all the rest to Notger."

From the Place du Marché we drove to the citadel, getting a good idea of the remarkable position of the city, which is built partly in the valley and partly on the hill of Saint Walburga, which rises beside the river. It is a long way up to the citadel, but the view is magnificent. Southwards is the Ourthe, flowing through the great forest of the Ardennes through which we have been wandering. Northward are the dark hills of Petersheim, and below us the city; the massive slated roof of the cathedral, the square towers and lofty nave of St. Martin's towering above the other churches; the grand bridge across the river, and beyond, in the lovely valley, charming-looking country houses nestling among orchards—a refreshing contrast to the blackened chimneys and clouds of smoke above the manufactories which are the pride of Liège.

When we came down into the town again, the Bishop's Palace, the church of St. Jacques, and some other remnants of the past, carried us back to the proud days when it was a principality of the German Empire, and when its fierce burghers would submit to no rule but that of their Prince-Bishop. There is a curious relic of the middle ages in the church of St. Bar-

tholomew—a brass font, said to be the finest bit of Dinanterie existing ; it is of the eleventh century.

The distance between Liège and Namur is about forty miles, and is a two hours' journey by rail; until the embankment shuts out the view it is very picturesque; on the right, hills, with a foreground of houses and tall chimneys; on the left the Meuse, with its green islands ; and on the bank beyond, the village of Augrée full of tall chimneys.

Now the river takes a sudden bend, in the hollow of which is Seraing, a cloud of smoke hanging over its busy furnaces ; this was once delightfully wooded, and the favourite residence of the Bishops of Liège. The old Palace now serves as the entrance to the Cockerill manufactory for firearms. It seems sad that these fatal instruments of bloodshed should be created in such a smiling landscape as that which surrounds Liège. At Flemalle we had to change carriages, and soon after starting saw on our left the remarkable-looking Château de Chokier. It stands on a cliff which overhangs the road below. There are several châteaux on the opposite bank, but Chokier and Aigremont not far beyond it are the most remarkable.

Aigremont was one of the refuges of Rinaldo of Montauban and his brothers, but it is best known as the

fastness to which the Wild Boar of Ardennes retreated when he had with his own hand killed the secretary of Louis de Bourbon, Bishop of Liège. The Bishop besieged and took the castle, destroyed its fortifications, and presented it to the Count of Chimay. It is now used as a school.

We left the river at Amay, which is a charming station. The church is large and looked remarkable; and the village is built round it in the midst of trees, with hills rising behind.

Huy seems to be surrounded by charming villages nestling among trees beside the river, which the railway now closely follows; we go through a tunnel, and the most enchanting view opens before us.

The town lies on each side of the river, which is very broad here, and is spanned by a splendid bridge which forms the central point of the view. On the right rise lofty hills, covered with bright green vineyards, on the left dark wooded cliffs, over which towers the fort, placed on an overhanging gray rock, which contrasts with the green slope of the long chain of hills; below and half-way up the hills are the white houses of Huy, with its massively-towered collegiate church, and the spire of St. Pierre.

In front of this gray rock is a charming green vista through which the Meuse wanders, dotted on

the right side with villages, the nearest of which is Tihonge, the birthplace of John of Tihonge, Bishop of Tongres, about whose elevation to this See a miraculous legend is recorded.

There is much that is interesting in Huy. The view alone from the heights commanding the valleys of the rivers Mehaigne and the Hoyoux, which both fall into the Meuse at Huy, is very beautiful; and both these valleys, especially that of the Hoyoux, are worth exploring.

Very little remains of the ancient Abbey of Neufmoustier, founded by Peter the Hermit.

When the Apostle of the Crusades was returning from the Holy Land, with the Counts of Montaigu and Clermont, his ship was overtaken by a storm and much damaged. Peter vowed that if ever he came safe to land he would build a monastery and a church on the model of the Holy Sepulchre; he retired into the monastery as soon as it was built, and when he died was buried in the crypt. Some authorities say that his remains were afterwards placed in the cathedral at Namur, others that they were dispersed at the French Revolution. There is a legend that Huy dates almost as far back as the Christian era, and that St. Maternus built its first church; other authorities say that it was

built in 148 by the Emperor Antoninus Pius, who, when travelling this way, was struck with the charming contrast between the green valley and the wild precipitous rocks that surrounded it.

It is certain that as far back as the tenth century it was a place of considerable importance.

The collegiate church is a fine building, but the exterior is very simple compared with the interior, which is rich in ornament; its chief glory is its rose window.

The people of Huy say that the three wonders of Huy are the bridge over the Meuse, the rose window, and the fountain. This bridge of seven arches connects the two parts of the town. The fountain on the Grande Place has a curiously-worked brass basin.

There are many legends connected with Huy and its neighbourhood, especially about the châteaux of Beaufort, and the misfortunes of Count Albert de Moha and his children, and also the fine château of Modave, on the Hoyoux.

A little beyond Huy are the ruins of Beaufort on the heights on the left, and soon we pass Andennes. It was at the tournament held at Andennes in 1273, that a peasant from the village of Jallet brought the cow he had stolen, which caused a two years' war between the hot-headed princes of the period, and cost 15,000 lives

before it ended. On the left is the modern château de Seilles, and then the village of Selayn. At a sharp bend of the river is the enormous rock of Samson, and on it some fragments of ruin; this is the château de Samson; near these is the Hind's cave, where a vast treasure guarded by a hind is said to be kept. There are various dark holes in the bank which doubtless harbour the Nutons, about whom this district, like all the rest of the country we have visited, abounds in stories. It seems that these little brown-faced pigmies have the most passionate admiration for fair-faced, fresh young maidens, and more than once it has happened that by their gifts and their flattery they have stolen away the hearts of their mortal sweethearts, who have persisted in refusing all the neighbouring swains for the sake of the brownie lover.

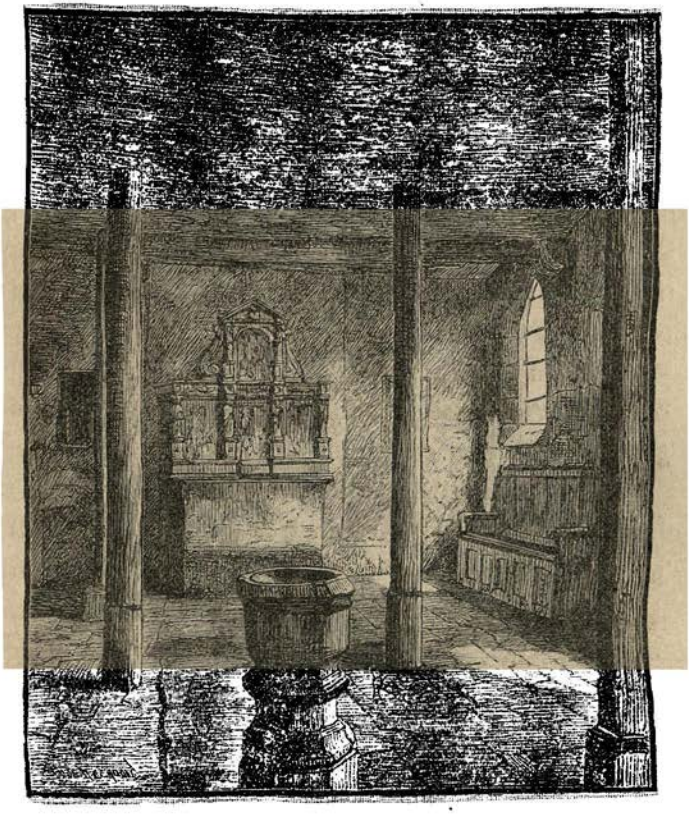
There is another legend, very common everywhere, but especially in the valley of the Meuse. Goats with golden horns and hoofs guard hidden treasures; and everywhere one meets with stories of some hardy treasure-seeker who, if he could only have kept silence, would have become possessed of these ill-gotten hoards. Not so long ago a man positively affirmed that he raised a chest out of the hole in which it was sunk, and heard the chink of gold within, but, alas, the sound overcame

his prudence. "I have it this time!" he exclaimed, and, behold, the trunk slipped back into the earth, which at once closed over it, while the unlucky seeker rolled down the steep cliff on the side of which he had been digging, and only just escaped falling into the river below.

Namèche, on the opposite bank, has in its village church a most curious collection of ancient monuments, or rather tombstones, one of which has inscribed on the stone, "The rightful hereditary chatelaine of Samson." Galliot, the historian of Namur, says this is the tomb of Sibyl of Lusignan, mother of Baldwin, the last king of Jerusalem.

Very soon we come to Marche-les-Dames, and its grand rocks covered with magnificent ivy. The name of this place has a very pathetic origin. In the time of Count Albert the third of Namur, when their husbands went to the Holy Land, a number of wives retired to this quiet secluded valley and built a chapel there, in which they spent most of their time praying for the safe return of their beloved ones.

But when at last the survivors returned from Palestine, there was deep lamentation in the valley of Notre-Dame du Vivier, for most of these fair young wives were widowed.



OLD CHAPEL NEAR NAMUR.

They resolved to build a convent in the valley, and to end their days there; and many young girls left orphans by the Crusade joined their company. This

abbey flourished, and three hundred years after adopted the rule of the Cistercians.

The valley goes on increasing in beauty with the fantastic ever-varying crags on either hand, bordered by green vineyards, and pleasant meadows, and fruitful orchards; the broad winding river is gemmed by green islands; and sometimes, where the crags recede from the river, there are golden patches of corn or of red earth newly turned, waiting for a fresh crop.

Here we are in sight of the two bridges of Namur, one over the Sambre the other over the Meuse, and there is the citadel on the heights.

Namur is picturesque-looking, but, after one has been so long in the Ardennes, it seems to want trees around it; and though it is a pleasant and very clean town, and has a most comfortable Hotel, we remembered that we had a dear friend awaiting us at Dinant, and perhaps for that reason paid scant attention to Namur.

CHAPTER XV.

SPA.

IT was very pleasant to find ourselves once more in charming Dinant, and to be warmly welcomed by our artist friends at the Tête d'Or; and we were more unwilling than ever to leave the dear little town, though we had an attractive journey before us, to end with Trèves and Rheims, and the society of a most congenial fellow-traveller.

However, we said at last a final Good-bye, or rather "*au revoir*," to our friends and to the fair town beside the Meuse, and, a merry party of three, we started for Spa, taking the same line of route by which we had come from Liège.

Soon after leaving Liège we enter the lovely valley of the Vesdre, and pass Chaudefontaine in its nest of fir-trees. It looks very sweet and lovely, but too closed in to be healthy, and we heard that the air was very relaxing.

We had to change carriages at Pepinster, a very uninteresting station.

From Pepinster, we travel through a pretty valley beside the little river Hoëgne, and soon reach Theux, once the chief town of the Marquisate of Franchimont. It was from Theux that the famous six hundred men of Franchimont marched to help their fellow-countrymen of Liège when the Duke of Burgundy and Louis XI. of France besieged that city, and so enraged was Charles the Bold by their valiant attack on his camp, that, not content with their destruction, and the fearful massacre of the Liègeois, he devastated the territory of Franchimont with fire and sword. Theux is now only an ancient village.

All at once, frowning down on us from a hill on the right, we saw the grand old ruins of Franchimont, another of the fortresses of William de la Marck; in which, after the Wild Boar's execution by the Bishop of Liège Jean de Hornes, the brothers de la Marck successfully resisted the Bishop's attempts to take them.

The ruins seemed most imposing in the evening light, but we heard that they look much better from a distance; they are splendidly placed, though the view of them is only momentary.

We did not reach Spa till late; we found very pleasant rooms ready for us at that most comfortable inn, Hôtel de l'Europe. During the holiday time it is a good plan to write for rooms several days in advance.

The season at Spa was just over, and though, while we were at Remouchamps only a fortnight ago, we had been told it was next to impossible to get a bed in the town, we found next morning when we came down to breakfast that we were almost the only occupants of the vast salle.

PROMENADE DE SEPT HEURES.

On the previous evening we had seen some of the pretty shop-windows filled with "objets de Spa." These are boxes, jewellery, nicknacks of all kinds, made of wood, which has been turned a gray colour by infusion in the iron springs of Spa, and then painted, sometimes very carefully, and highly varnished. The

effect is very pretty and glittering; and the main street, which has these shops on each side of it, is decorated here and there with hanging baskets full of graceful green trailing plants.

PEASANTS FROM COO.

We walked down this very charming street next morning to the Bath Establishment, which has a garden with stone baskets about it full of lovely flowers and trailing plants; this is on the Place Royale, which is planted with chestnut and lime trees, and leads on the right into the Promenade de Sept Heures, which extends to the foot

of the hill of Annette and Lubin. This Promenade is closely shaded with trees, and much frequented during the season; a band plays there every day.

Spa seemed to us a charming little toy-shop, surrounded by green hills and pleasant walks; from it some of the loveliest spots in the Ardennes can be reached, notably the valley of the Amblève, with Remouchamps and Coo. It is just the place for invalids who love beautiful country as well as great comfort. Everything at Spa is clean and well kept, and there is an excellent English church with plenty of services.

There are generally standing about in the Place Royale peasants with fruit and vegetables from Coo or the neighbouring villages.

After seeing the town we drove to the fountains, first visiting the Pouhan du Prince de Condé; the Pouhan de Pierre le Grand, in the middle of the town, is rebuilding; we drove uphill through an avenue of trees to the Tonnelet, a little fountain where a group of men in blouses were talking eagerly, and drinking, from a bottle, something evidently more palatable than this sulphur-flavoured water. Then we drove along a tree-shaded road to La Sauvenière. There is a restaurant here, but not of an appetising character, for the soup had a flavour of herring, and the cutlets were half-cooked.

However, it was delightful to sit under the shade of some grand old trees and lunch al fresco. Near us was a sort of alley or Pergola, covered with Virginia creeper of all exquisite shades of red and purple. There are delightful rambles in this wood of La Sauvenière. About half-way along the avenue, between this fountain and

SPA—LA SAUVENIÈRE.

that of Geronstére, is the foaming brook the Pichefotte, and between this and Spa is the picturesque walk called the Promenade des Artistes, full of little glens and cascades. But the Geronstére is the most interesting of the fountains; it is farther from the road than the others, and stands in a park of tall forest trees, among

which are many delightful walks. There is a deserted melancholy look about the Geronstére, which gives it a special charm. The water of this fountain is strongly impregnated with iron, and will not bear exportation.

A very pleasant walk may be taken between this fountain and the next, the Barisart, called Promenade Meyerbeer. All the time we had been driving along shaded roads, circling higher and higher round the green basin formed by the hills, at the bottom of which lies Spa, the town often so entirely hidden that it would be easy to believe one is in open country again, but for the hedges beside the road, and the evidences of a more careful cultivation on the fields behind them.

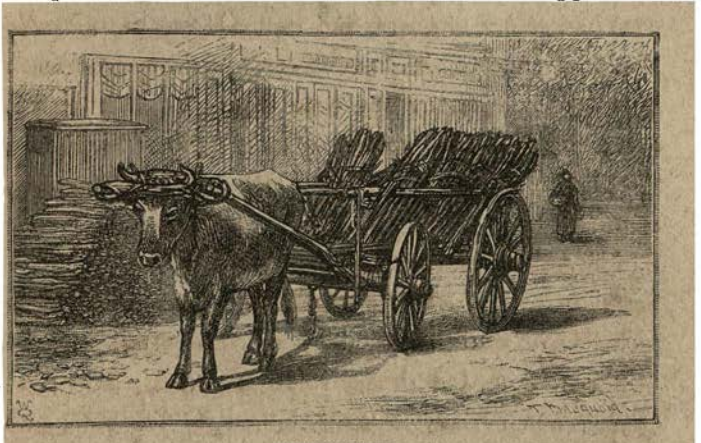
The drive to Sart seemed to us ordinary, but after reaching the village one can go on foot as far as the gorge, in which is the torrent of the Hoëgne. This is as wild as the torrents beside the Amblève, and is well worth seeing.

For a good walker there is an excursion across the Fagne, as the region of marsh surrounding Spa is called, to the Baraque Michel, one of the highest points in the Ardennes, and also from there to the Barrage de la Gileppe, an immense lake or reservoir only completed in 1878, a boon to Verviers and the other places, which it now supplies with water.

The Baraque Michel is a lonely house, 680 mètres above the level of the sea. In the winter the vast plains of open country around it are often covered with a trackless expanse of snow, which at that height is almost at once hard enough for sleighing, and this was, before the railway, the ordinary means of traffic across the Fagne between Malmedy, Spa, and Stavelot. But as soon as the snow began to melt the route was impassable, for the marshes being hidden, there was terrible danger of sinking into them through the slush of the softened snow.

One evening a rich merchant, on his way home to Sart, lost his way on the snow-plain. In vain he tried to regain it. There was not so much as a tree to serve as handpost on the dreary white expanse. The merchant, named Henri Fischbach, prayed for help, and vowed that if his life were spared he would found a refuge for travellers in similar plight. He had hardly made this vow when he spied a peasant coming towards him, who at once put him on the right track for his village. Thus miraculously saved he kept his promise, and on the spot where he had prayed for help he built a shelter for travellers, with a weathercock and a bell, and called it the Baraque Michel. A keeper was placed there, charged to ring a bell at intervals during the

night, and even during the day at stated times when the weather was foggy. Some years after, by the liberality of a family in Stavelot, the refuge was enlarged. It is said, however, that since a road has been made across the plain, both bell and weathercock have disappeared.



BULLOCK CART.

Picturesque-looking bullock carts come into Spa with loads of faggots for burning; even in early autumn the air is very cold here in the evening.

We were anxious to show the beauties of Coo to our friend, so we started one fine morning in a little open carriage. We had a good horse, but a most extraordinary driver. It was difficult to believe that his face was not made of gutta-percha, it went through

such rapid changes of expression. He had enormous ears, great brown eyes, with half-closed lids, and heavy flexible eyebrows. These rose so high as he spoke that his brown forehead was pushed up in curved ridges, while the lower part of his face kept fairly tranquil.

We passed Barisart, and drove along the pleasant shaded avenue to Geronstére, and soon after came out on the wild heathy Fagne. This drive is perfect. There is at first a wide prospect over the far-stretching moor to the hills beyond it; but it is when we descend from this height that we come to the full loveliness of this beautiful country.

The Roanne, a rushing little river, full of cascades, crosses our road; and on every side of us are lofty hills, some bare and rocky, others cone-shaped and thickly wooded, others again clothed for some distance with soft green turf, on which the cloud shadows make constantly changing effects of light and shade. Long before we reach La Gleize we see the dark, lofty hill of Coo towering like a giant over its neighbours; all the hills seem loftier near Coo than in other parts of the Ardennes, though the level is perhaps not really higher than at La Roche. There is no straight valley; we are completely surrounded by high hills. Wherever we look we see gorges between their steep sides; and the road

turns so rapidly that we are perpetually delighted with fresh pictures as we descend from the steep heights at last into the valley of the Amblève. La Gleize looks more charming than ever; and here we are again driving along the narrow valley, with its precipitous hills on either hand, and our lovely old friend the Amblève sparkling as it sings over its gray stones beside us. We had said to one another when we left Coo how much we should like to see it again, little thinking how soon the wish would be realised. Here we are in sight of the cascade and its hôtel, and there is the blasé waiter flinging pennies languidly into the toad's mouth, as if he had been doing it ever since we went away.

Our friend was as much charmed with Coo as we had been, and as soon as we had ordered our lunch we wandered into the little village. It looked so charming, so peaceful, its white houses basking in the sunshine in a nest of green orchards and bright flowers, that it seemed difficult to believe that life could be hard to live in such a place, and that in winter, as we were told, the inhabitants suffered bitterly from cold.

We were soon recognised in the village. A gipsy-faced woman, who looked seventy, but whose hair was dark as night, came up to us and said that when we were here before the Monsieur had sketched her son

mending his net, and Katharine Philippe also. This woman must have been once handsome; she had with her a daughter, a pretty bright girl about fourteen, whose portrait she wished the Monsieur to paint.

"She must first go and put herself straight," she said, "and then she can be drawn."

But "the Monsieur" objected to any alteration; he said he would paint her with her roughened hair, and in her everyday clothes, or not at all, to which the mother reluctantly consented. She shrugged her shoulders, however, evidently thinking Marie would have been much better worth sketching in her Sunday gown.

MARIE.

Just then a girl came to the door of Katharine Philippe's cottage. She said she was her sister, and I asked for Katharine.

"Ah, Madame, she is up there,"—pointing to the

hill behind the village,—"at work in the fields high up. But I have sent her up her coffee just now, and I have said that Monsieur and Madame have come back."

I left our friend and the artist and his model, and went through the village. It ends in deep shadow, the path curving into a tree-shaded lane, by which I came back to the arm of river which divides the hôtel from le petit Coo. Beside this I found the other inn, which does not look inviting. Just beyond it was a delightful cottage garden, full of sunflowers, gleaming in the warm light. As I went round to the village again, I met Katharine Philippe looking for me. She was more pleased than I could have thought so calm and undemonstrative a girl would have been, and much gratified that our friend had come with us on purpose to see Coo. It seemed to puzzle her that we all admired the village and the scenery more than the cascade. While the sketch of Marie was being made, and our friend was engaged in giving sous to little boys, I walked up and down with Katharine. She told me that she and her parents, her four brothers, and her sister, all lived by their hard work. She said the cottage was too small, but that it saved money for all to live together. In the winter her brothers fished or made nets, or, and she laughed, turned their hands to anything; but worked hard every day.

"And you and your sister," I said; "you cannot work in the fields all the year round?"

"No,"—she looked rather sad,—"but there are stones to clear away, and we do other things. We have to sell the fish, and I can sew, and then there is the business. Madame knows that our house is a café," she said, gravely.

I was standing at the open door as she spoke. Into the small entrance-room,—which was plainly the kitchen, with a fire on the broad hearth, and a few pots and pans,—came down a staircase, and on the right I saw an inner room with benches. Two men were sitting there drinking.

As we again walked up and down, I asked if the brothers and sisters were all unmarried.

"Yes," Katharine said; "we have mouths enough to feed as it is, we do not want another among us."

I suggested that if she married she would find some one to work for her.

She shook her head, but a slight tinge of colour made me sure that Katharine Philippe was not so unconcerned about the state of marriage as she professed to be.

"Then that would be worse for those at home, Madame; there would be one pair of hands less, and I work well, and my father and mother are getting old and

feeble—No, I cannot leave them," she shook her head, as much as to say there was nothing more to be said.

But I argued that it must come to the same thing, and if there were five left to work for her parents, and if she saw any one with whom she could be happy, she would be wise to marry; for Katharine looked so superior to the other villagers, and spoke so well, that it was painful to think of her working her life away like a labourer in the blazing sunshine on the top of the hills.

"Madame," she said, "I have seen what marriage does; my parents married, and thought they could live by their work, and what has happened? my mother went on having children—there have been nine of us, and they ate much more than she and my father could earn. I can remember when we had scarce so much as a bit of crockery in the house, and now—now," she went on after a pause, "we have nearly all we want; but it is because we never leave off working."

I have said before that Katharine was not good-looking, but as she spoke her blue eyes looked so honest, and her whole face so earnest and self-reliant, that I thought her very attractive. She was sunburnt, but she had plenty of bright fair hair neatly and smoothly gathered round her head; the hair of some of her neighbours seemed quite unconscious of the use

of a brush and comb. I felt more than ever discontented with Katharine's lot.

"But," I said, "I suppose if you meet with some one you really like, then you will marry him?"

She laughed and shook her head. "I shall not marry. If it was as Madame says, the person I liked might not ask me; and if he did, how could I tell what sort of man he really was till I was his wife? Allez! Madame, a man is quite different before he marries, and after; if he had money he might be bad, there is no saying. Enfin, I have plenty of work, and I am best as I am."

Her tone brought conviction with it; her creed evidently was that earning one's own living was the great law of life, and I fancy love would hold a very small place in her scale of qualities. She did not see any attraction in herself, and looked at marriage as a mere means of livelihood, like all the rest; perhaps, after all, her unsophisticated idea was not unlike the fashionable creed of marriage in these days.

We did not get a good lunch, as we had not given notice beforehand, but our landlady assured us that if we had only written we could have been much better served. The threatened railway station, though it will destroy the primitive charm of Coo, will increase its "creature comforts." Before we said good-bye to Katharine

Philippe we bought her bonnet, and this seemed to cause much wonder in the village ; one old woman brought out her own, quite a new one, and suggested that it would have been far more fit for Monsieur to paint.

We drove back by a different road ; in some places even more beautiful than that of the morning, and reached Spa in the dusk, having all heartily enjoyed our day in the air, for we had even lunched out of doors at the Hotel de la Cascade.

Remouchamps and Stoumont can also be reached from Spa, and there are many other walks and drives to be taken from the bright pleasant little town in its nest of green ; there are excellent hotels at Spa, and very good shops ; carriages and horses can always be had, and there are plenty of lodgings. The climate is excellent, except that the evenings and early mornings are severely cold, and said to be dangerous for delicate people.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EASTERN ARDENNES—DIEKIRCH AND THE VALLEY OF THE SURE.

WE were very glad to see once more the picturesque rocks near Trois-Ponts and Viel-Salm. The line travels chiefly through a richly-wooded valley, till it reaches the lofty hill that separates the great watersheds of the Meuse and the Moselle. Then we begin to travel beside the river Wolz, and soon reach Trois-Vierges, where there is a German douane.

There was some delay in examining luggage here—the chief anxiety of the officials seemed to be about "objets de Spa;" but when they heard we had only a few, they let us pass easily.

The road now became wilder and more beautiful. We crossed the river Wilz or Wolz repeatedly, and passed through several tunnels. This line of railway seems to be a triumph of engineering in the difficulties it has had to surmount. Certainly no one should leave

the Ardennes without seeing this side of the country. Less densely wooded than on its Belgian side, the hills are extremely wild and picturesque, full of romantic-looking gorges. At Goebessmuhle we first saw the Sure, into which the Wolz falls; and the valley of this river is most beautiful, the lofty rocks crowned with so many remarkable ruins. Bourscheid and Brandenburg, which can be reached from Michelau, and again, when we have passed Ettelbruck, Vianden, the grandest ruin in Belgium—Falkenberg, Stollenbourg, Feltz, and many others; and, south of Diekirch, the remarkable ruins of Beaufort.

All the way to Diekirch the journey is full of interest. This Grand Duchy Ardennes country, though different from its Belgian namesake, is yet to the full as interesting and beautiful, but there is no longer the radiant smiling aspect we had so often met with beside the Meuse, the Semois, and the Amblève.

This country seems well suited for robbers' and bandits' haunts, and the abundance of ruined strongholds seems to prove that the tyrants of olden time quite held this opinion. The Sure is a fine river, and it winds as continually as the Ourthe does farther west.

We did not reach Diekirch till evening, and the clean little town was so full of visitors that though we

had written for rooms, we had to be lodged in a dependance of the Hotel des Ardennes. However, there was nothing to regret, as the inn itself was full of holiday-seekers and large families of schoolboys; and the dependance is a large, cleanly-kept château, which its owner lends during the summer season to his neighbour, our host at the Ardennes. The château is on the opposite side of the road, and has a good-sized garden in front, and through this, as soon as we heard the welcome ringing-in to supper, we went stumbling through the darkness in procession, our kindly old chambermaid carrying a candle in front of us, lest we should miss our road. We found a large square room, with tables all round it; presently these filled with the visitors, and the laughing and talking were unbounded. It was really pleasant to see such thorough enjoyment. They seemed less rough and animal than the people at La Roche—but there were some spectacled German professors among them, who ate with their eyes so close to their plates that it was a wonder their noses escaped from knife and fork.

And how they did eat!—dish after dish was emptied and wine and beer vanished in a twinkling. Our host, M. Alexis Heck, watched over and directed his numerous staff of waiters, as if they had been a flock of

sheep. There was much system about the whole affair, and this greatly shortened the meal, spite of the great number of supper-eaters.

When we got back to our hotel we found the old chambermaid was absent, and two young women presented themselves to receive us, who shook their heads at being spoken to in French. German was tried, and then they gabbled some extraordinary jargon, and burst out into irrepressible laughter. We found afterwards that they were raw country girls who could only speak patois—it sounded like a mixture of Flemish and German. They may possibly have been Dutch women.

Next morning our Ardennes maid was full of apology, and seemed quite distressed that we should have been laughed at, for the delinquents had evidently told of their behaviour. She was close by, she said, if they had not been too lazy to fetch her.

We went over early to the inn, and, to our great delight, found that one of our Dinant artist-friends had come to spend a little time with us at Diekirch, though, to our regret, without "Jim." This made the day quite a little fête; and we began it in a charming manner, by breakfasting in the open air, on a kind of terrace overlooking the river which runs at the back of the hotel. There is very good fishing in the Sure and

its tributaries; and Diekirch has a reputation among anglers: we ate our breakfast as we watched a little knot of three in consultation with M. Heck about the merits of a new rod, the property of one of the party. Nowhere did we get more delicious coffee or more exquisite petit pains and fresh butter than at Diekirch; but we heard that the rolls had been made expressly for la famille Anglaise, and we had certainly noticed overnight that there was black as well as the ordinary pain du ménage on the supper table. M. Heck evidently has a high opinion of English travellers; he was in all ways most kind and attentive.

After breakfast, we ordered a carriage to take us to Vianden, and then we went round the little town. It is pleasantly situated on the side of the Herrenberg hills, from the top of which there is a splendid view; the town is girdled in with trees, and beside the Sure there are pleasant gardens, with gay flowers and clinging greenery; there are also avenues of limes, tiny boulevards, which give Diekirch a fresh and trim aspect. Most of the windows had pot-flowers; the pots were glazed and striped brown and yellow. The town is one of the oldest in these Eastern Ardennes, says Monsieur Joly; and perhaps takes its name from the fact that here St. Eloi began his mission among the

heathen inhabitants. It is possible that the first Christian place of worship may have been called Die Kirche, and that the name has been given to the place, as Diekirch is one of the oldest towns in the Ardennes. We were disappointed to find that the church has been very much restored. There are in it some monuments to the Goethals family, and a Goethals-Pecstiern is the present Marquis of Diekirch.

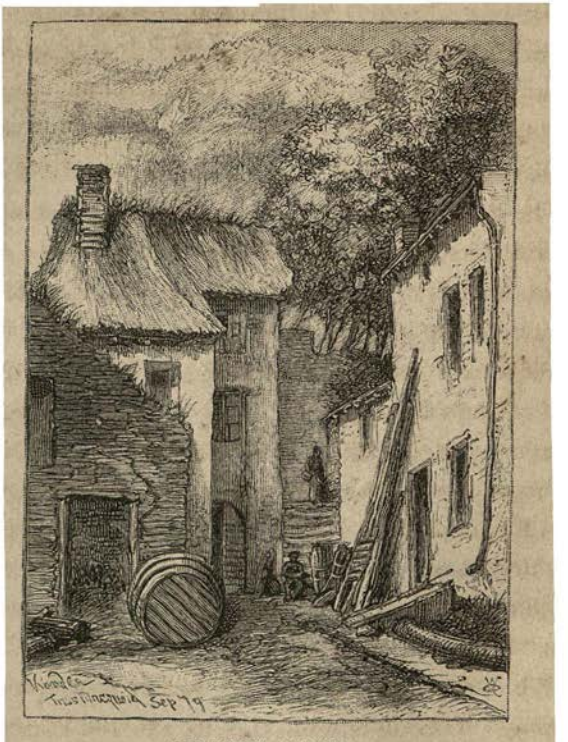
Diekirch would be a pleasant place to make a long stay in, there is so much worth examining and sketching within ten miles round; there are older ruins in this neighbourhood than any existing in the Western Ardennes; and, as has been said, there is good fishing to be had.

We should have liked also to spend some days at Mersch, a little town where the rivers Eisch and Mamer join the Alzette. It is surrounded by interesting ruins, wild valleys, and fine points of view. We were told it is a good fishing station.

Mersch is only a few miles' drive south of Diekirch, or by going back to Ettelbruck, and changing there for Mersch, it is reached in less than an hour by railway, the delay at Ettelbruck included.

We had heard so much of the castle of Vianden, and we felt so fired by a photograph we saw of it at Diekirch, that we were impatient to reach this grand ruin.

It was a fine morning, full of sunshine, and we were a happy party; all so glad to be together again. The



OLD HOUSES, VIANDEN.

drive was very beautiful, and lay for some way near the river, so straight that it looked like a canal. But I shall never forget when—after a while we got into more hilly

country—at a sudden turn in the road, across the valley on the left, at some distance appeared, as if by magic, on a lofty hill the grand towers of Vianden, and just below it the town clinging to the side of the hill. Below the town runs the Aar, and a bridge across the river Our joins this upper town to a second Vianden on this side the river.

The town itself is most picturesque-looking, with its gabled irregular houses, and red-tiled roofs; and the orange tone of the stones of the ruins adds much to the richness of the general effect.

We drove down the hill, and at its foot came in sight of the castle again. Then we drove through the lower town across the bridge, and had a steep climb to the upper town. We left our carriage at the inn, Hôtel de Luxembourg, and took our way to the château. The town looked so old and interesting that we were unwilling to leave it unexplored; but as we had come to see the ruins, we went first to find them.

We went uphill till we came to a round-headed gateway. Having entered this, we saw the Waschthurm, where the bells of the town are kept. We had to wait here for the key of the château and a guide. In the book in which visitors write their names is a note from Victor Hugo about the restoration of the ruins.

A triple wall surrounded Vianden, but much of it has been wilfully demolished. It is most saddening to learn that up to 1820 these ruins were in good preservation. Beautiful as they look from a distance, they are infinitely more so when one examines them closely.

We entered through the Salle des Comtes, which has a row of pointed arches down the centre, supported on columns. This hall is about a hundred feet long, and more than thirty feet wide. The windows are very fine. On one side of this is the kitchen, etc., and next to it a very large hall, called the Salle des Chevaliers. This is more perfect than the Salle des Comtes; and the capitals to the columns are beautifully carved. There is an immense vault beneath, but the guide said there was too much water for us to venture in. Next we went into the chapel, which has been partly restored. In the centre of this chapel is the decagonal-shaped two-storied opening, which has given rise to so much antiquarian discussion. Going down a flight of steps, we found that this double well communicates with a sort of ambulatory, which goes completely round it, and which is lighted in some places by external windows. It has been said that Vianden, or rather this so-called chapel, was one of the places of meeting of the terrible Vehm-gericht, and that prisoners subject to

its jurisdiction were lodged in cells in this outer corridor, and, being placed in turn on a chair in the lower well, were raised by some means to a level with the judges who sate round the upper floor of the opening. This idea seems worthy of Georges Sand, and is admirably in keeping with the wild region that surrounds the castle. It is impossible to give an idea either of the extent or the beauty of these ruins. The colour of the stone is exquisite, offering combinations of red, brown, and orange, that add much to the picturesque effect. At one end, through a small richly ornamented door, we went down a flight of steps into a vault, of which the groined roof, supported by arches on pillars, still remains. There were other openings into this, but the colour and the effect of light and shade on the rich and varied romanesque mouldings I shall never forget. One of the striking features of the castle, both from a distance and when close to it, is the high-pitched roofless gable at each end of the centre buildings. Across one of these runs a huge fissure, made wilfully a few years ago in forcibly dragging out the lead and iron work of the construction, in order to sell them. At one corner is the tower of Yolande. She was a beautiful damsel, only daughter of Count Henri I. of Vianden and his wife, the proud Ermengarde, who

had royal quarterings in her scutcheon. The maiden, who was very devout, had vowed herself to the cloister, but her mother had ambitious views for her, and bade Yolande prepare herself to receive an earthly spouse.

"I cannot, mother," said Yolande. "Let me, I pray, enter as a probationer in the Abbey of Marienthal."

Ermengarde was furious. She went to her husband, and, with his consent, she caused Yolande to be shut up in the top story of this the loftiest tower of the castle. The Countess was triumphant; she had no faith in the resolution of a meek gentle girl like Yolande, and she felt sure that a few days of captivity and a diet of bread and water would bring her disobedient daughter to reason.

But on the first night after Yolande had been shut up in the tower she waited until all was dark and quiet in the castle, and then tearing the sheets on her bed into long strips, she knotted them securely, fastened them to the heavy window bolts, and courageously let herself down into the court, a height of fifty feet. The legend does not relate how she managed to escape from the triple walls of the castle—probably the warders favoured her flight. It is, however, certain that she reached the Abbey of Marienthal in safety, and was shielded by the Abbess from all further persecution.

The ruins of Marienthal still stand in the valley of the Eisch, and form an interesting excursion from Mersch. Some way above them are the grand ruins of Hollenfelz, but the front of this château has been modernised. Some years later, when misfortune fell on the house of Vianden, the countess became penitent, and was received into the convent, where she spent the rest of her days under the rule of her daughter Yolande, who had been chosen Abbess of Marienthal.

Except where the outer walls intercept it, the view from the castle of Vianden is wonderful. Perched on a rock four hundred feet above the river, and surrounded by other rocks, some of which are still more lofty and commanding, it overlooks, till a sudden turn closes the view, the rugged and wild valley of the Our, while from its other side one sees the town clinging to the steep cliff, with wooded hills beyond.

The longer we strayed among the ruins the more we wondered that we should have heard so little of so splendid a building, which from every side is so grand and imposing a feature of the Our valley.

It is not, however, one of his possessions of which its royal owner can feel proud, as it has been shamefully treated through the indifference of his predecessor.

The first lord of Vianden or Vienne, as some of the

old books call it, was Frederic I., 1124. The last was Godefroi III., who went to the Crusade, and died in the isle of Cyprus in 1335; then, as he only left daughters, his lands were divided between the husbands of these daughters, the Counts of Sponheim and Nassau.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Vianden became the property of the State. After Napoleon's invasion he gave the château, in 1810, to one of his followers, the Baron de Marbœuf, but he died, and it again lapsed to the State, which does not seem to have attached any value to it, and yielded it to the Syndicate of Mortemain. The Syndicate sold it for three thousand two hundred florins to an echevin of the town, named Coster, who offered it to the King of Holland as the representative of the Counts of Nassau, who had for so long ruled over it; but though the actual building was still entire, when the king learned that it would cost forty thousand francs to restore it to a habitable condition, he refused to purchase it. This refusal disappointed Coster, and, determined to make the most of his bargain, he began systematically to pull to pieces the still well-preserved building. First he unroofed it, and took away the floors, and sold the beams and rafters; these, it is said, were so prodigious in size that there was much wonder

as to whence they could have been brought; the leaden roofs and the chimneys were next carried away and sold, also the ironwork used in the building; altogether, with these and an infinity of stonework, Mr. Coster realised twenty thousand francs on his work of demolition.

Very tardily, and all too late to save it from ruin, the state of this grand castle reached the ears of King William, and in 1842, the year following his accession, he came to Vianden and bought back the ruins for one hundred and twenty pounds, and promised to rebuild the château. The chapel has been partly restored under the directions of Prince Henry of Nassau, whose property it now is, and there is hope that yet more will be done; but it is sad to look at the ruins, and to think that the King of Holland preferred to abandon them to the mercies of a money-getting bourgeois, rather than buy them from him for the sum of two hundred and seventy pounds.

When at last we left the castle we were told that instead of going back to the inn, we should make for the ridge of rocks behind the castle, and find our way down into the valley, where the carriage would meet us. While we waited for a guide to tell us the way we strolled into a quaint old-fashioned garden that must have belonged to the château. In one corner were some

primitive-looking straw beehives, and on each side the little pathway a plot of vegetables, enlivened with dahlias, marigolds, and other flowers. They were very special marigolds, very large and double, of the old-fashioned kind one finds in cottage gardens at home—but all shades of yellow, from palest sulphur to most glorious orange.

The woman who had opened the gate for us seemed greatly amused with our delight in her flowers, and gave us free leave to gather some of them. There were plenty of tall parsnip-seed heads; until one of our friends bid me taste these seeds I had no idea how nice they are; they have the sort of aromatic pungency that is so special to some monkish liqueurs, and are probably made use of by the reverend fathers for their decoctions. But now here is our guide, and we have to leave this pleasant idling to listen to the directions for our walk, which do not sound very distinct. After we leave him he stands watching us as we skirt the edge of the steep cliff that goes four hundred feet sheer down to the valley below. Soon we came to a broad, delightfully-shaded avenue, with a little beech wood on each side; this led us out again to the open hill, where we found a calvary enclosed in a tiny garden full of charming flowers; the view from here

is very fine; but a path on the left, through the wood, leads to a much finer view, and one sees the ruins of Stolzenbourg and Falkenstein towering over the valley; keeping to the left as we descend, we get a sudden and magnificent view of the towers of Vianden. After we left the calvary we took a descending path cut on the side of the hill, which towered above us on the left, and from its fantastic shape caused our path to turn frequently; presently we reached Bildchen, a little chapel built on a spur of rock with some very welcome benches in front, on which we sat and rested while we looked down on the valley. Pilgrimages are made to this chapel by childless wives, and by girls who desire husbands.

The chapel was built in 1848, and takes its name, Bildchen, from a miraculous legend concerning a small picture of the Virgin found on this spot by some children.

Behind the chapel we found a pleasant path that led us down beside a fir-wood to the bottom of the valley. Looking in among the fir-trees, we saw, seated on the most exquisite sea-green moss, agarics of the rarest red and orange, with frills and stalks like sea-foam; we gathered some, but, alas! did not succeed in bearing them home in safety. It was quite a fresh view from the bottom of the valley, but full of beauty. Still, as we had been walking for some

hours, we rejoiced to see the carriage waiting for us near the river-side.

We were all able to do full justice to the nice little dinner prepared for us at the Hôtel du Luxembourg, but our tall, dignified-looking hostess was sad at our delay; "everything was spoiled," she said; and to all our praise she answered without a smile that we were "very kind to say so." We were surprised to hear French spoken in this inn, and we asked Madame Koch if she were Belgian or German.

"I am neither," she said, in her grave dignified way; "I am of Vianden."

While one of our companions sketched, after dinner, we found our way into the kitchen, and began talking to our hostess. There came in presently a Belgian gentleman, just returned from shooting; evidently he was going to superintend some cookery, but hearing that we were asking questions about the country, he very politely gave us much information about Vianden and its neighbourhood. He urged us strongly to go and see Beaufort, which, he said, belonged to a member of his family, Count of Beaufort de Liedkerke, the owner of the Château de Vève, near Dinant. He told us that the last survivors of the ancient family of Falkenstein still dwell in the ruined tower of Falken-

stein,—mere peasants, however, earning their daily bread by hard work. He also said that the descendant of another noble house, the castle of which was not far off,—a princess of the German Empire if she could only assert her rights,—was actually a servant at the hotel we were in. We much regretted that we had not met with this courteous gentleman before our visit to the castle, as he was thoroughly versed in its archæology, and in the history of the surrounding country.

If we had known beforehand that we should find so clean an inn, I think we should have arranged to stay a few days at Vianden, and our artists, too, greatly regretted having no time to make sketches. It is in a most interesting part of the country, besides the ruins of picturesque beauty it possesses in its town and its castle. However, we were told that there is only one really good bedroom in the hotel, and it is always necessary to write beforehand; at present our friend the archæologist and his garde de chasse had possession of all the sleeping-rooms.

We left Vianden very unwillingly and by a new route. We took the road on the right, which leads gently uphill to Roth. We seemed at first to be travelling through an orchard, fruit-trees are so abundant in this country. But as we mounted the road

became more open, and soon we commanded a view of the whole valley, with Vianden towering in its midst. This is by far the finest view of the château, and is simply magnificent.

CALVARY.

On the other side our driver pointed out to us the old church of Roth, where there are the remains of a house of Knights Templars. We went to look at the romanesque church, which is very old and curious. Behind it is a very ancient calvary of the rudest sculptured stone. We found some curious relics, seemingly of the old priory, built into a dwelling-house close by, but it was so evidently inhabited that we did

not like to prosecute our search for the ruins of Roth. As we drove on we were shown some more ruined castles on the heights in the valley. Falkenstein is a most picturesque ruin, and we much regretted that we had not time to visit it. Both it and Stolzenbourg can be easily reached from Vianden. Another pleasant excursion we learned could be made to Neuerbourg, where there is a comfortable inn, Hotel de Vienne.

I think we were all sad when we said good-bye to clean, bright, little Diekirch, for we felt that this was the end of our visit to the Ardennes; and we were very sorry to pass by Echternach and the beautiful ruined château of Beaufort. Compared with the castles of the Our valley, Beaufort is comparatively modern, as it dates chiefly from the sixteenth century, but its position is most picturesque and striking, and the scenery among which it stands is lovely. Echternach, another old town on the Sure, is said to be very interesting, and although it has a railway station, it preserves a primitive ceremonial of the Middle Ages, still called "the dancing or jumping procession of Echternach." There is a tradition that years ago a dancing mania took possession of the beasts of this country,—cows and oxen, horses and sheep, danced themselves to death,—and to atone for the sinfulness which was supposed to have drawn this

plague upon them, the people of Echternach and its neighbourhood resolved to make a yearly pilgrimage each Pentecost to St. Willibrod. It is difficult to realise that this simple faith still exists; and it is very interesting to learn that the pilgrimage is no mere show, but is still considered as an act of deep penitence. It takes place each year on Whitsun Tuesday, and on the 19th of May 1880, very early in the morning, the peasantry of the Grand Duchy and the neighbouring country were marching under the banners of their respective parishes to Echternach. At eight o'clock they assembled beyond the bridge over the Sure to hear a sermon preached by Monsieur le Doyen—in former times the Abbot of Echternach presided over the ceremony. After this they marched in procession for some distance in the following order:—First came six hundred singers, followed by twelve banner-bearers, then sixty priests, then one hundred and thirty musicians, four abreast, playing the air on which "God save the King" is founded; then upwards of eight thousand dancers, followed by more than two thousand persons, who prayed as they walked; besides these there were one hundred and twenty directors of the procession, so that there were present, says my informant, Monsieur le Doyen d'Echternach, from ten to

twelve thousand assistants. The dance itself is very curious, three steps forward and two back; they hold each other's handkerchiefs, so as to keep in line. It must be very fatiguing, for they dance more than half a mile before they reach the church, then they dance up to the altar, reverently make their offerings, and dance out again.

It is as purely a religious ceremony even in these days, as the Breton pardons are, only without the wild drunken endings of those primitive festivals; and it seems remarkable to find such a mediæval custom so near to Prussia and the great highway of Europe. One can only hope it will keep its simplicity, and not degenerate into a mere spectacle.

From Diekirch we had to go back to Ettelbruck, and thence on to Luxembourg, which looked very picturesque as we passed through it on our way to Trèves. We lingered some never-to-be-forgotten days in the old city of the Emperors; but I have not space here to record them, or to speak of all we saw. There is a halo of departed greatness and a presence of actual magnificence in the grand old Roman city, and the wonderful monument of Igel, a few miles away, that claim many pages, almost a book, to themselves.

From Trèves we went on to Metz, which we found

in great excitement, the Emperor William having left the day before after reviewing the troops and inspecting the battle-fields of Metz and Bazeilles.

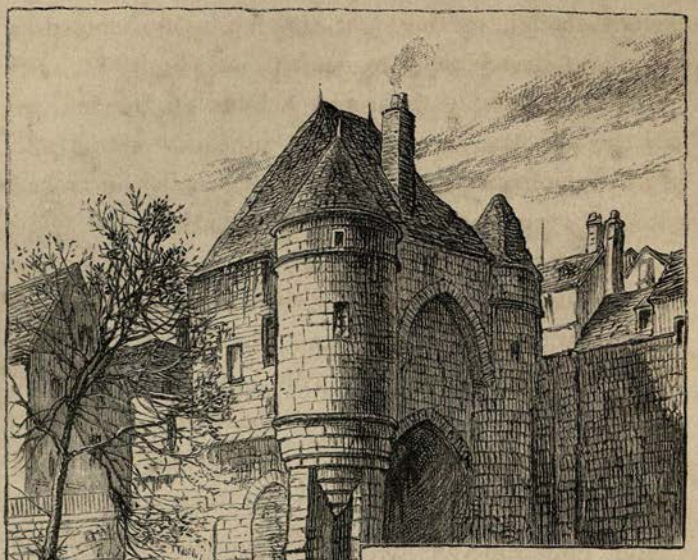
The cathedral of Metz is fine, and looks very imposing in the dusk, glowering down on the square in which it stands with a great red eye,—an illuminated clock in one of the towers.

But next day the glories of Rheims Cathedral nearly effaced Metz from our memories. The west front of that wonderful church at Rheims by moonlight is something that can never fade from memory. Our windows at the hotel faced the west doors, and it was impossible to go to bed for gazing, so magnificent was the effect of light and shade—silver and ebon, and grays of the most radiant tone—on the delicate sculptures opposite. But Rheims Cathedral, like Amiens, is far too well known to require description. The town is full of interest; its Archbishop's palace in which so much French history has been enacted, with portraits of almost all the French Kings; its fine abbey church of St. Remi; its quaint houses and pleasant boulevards, make it a place one is willing to linger in, and the Hotel is truly comfortable. Outside the town are some of the huge warehouses of Madame Clicquot and other champagne-growers.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN OLD FRENCH CITY

TRAVELLERS visit Rheims and Bourges and Amiens and Chartres to see their cathedrals, and because of the architectural associations belonging to these towns: yet travellers as a rule pass by Laon, an old French city which possesses a remarkable cathedral, an abbey church, and much besides of antiquarian interest, and which was the capital city of the Carlovingian kings of France. And yet Laon is not quite as far from Paris as Rheims is, and can be reached from Paris by railway in a few hours. The country between Laon and Rheims is very flat; but all at once, as one journeys along the monotonous plain, first one sees the towers, and then the grand cathedral of Laon, surrounded by its towers, appears standing abruptly on the end of a range of lofty hills. It forms a most striking picture for some time before one reaches the station. On leaving the station the road begins to mount towards



GATEWAY (PORTE ROYER).

the town, zigzagged up the steep rock. The omnibus was full of Laon people returning home, who showed much interest in our visit to their city. As we ascended we could see open country on either side between the rows of chestnut and acacia trees that bordered the dusty road, but soon a steep rocky bank rose upon

the left, though on the right the level plain seemed as if it might stretch away to Amiens.

Suddenly, above the rocky heights on the left, we saw the imposing group of the cathedral towers; and in a few moments we drove into Laon under an arched gateway, seemingly of the Empire period.

The streets looked narrow and quaint, and our inn, the Hôtel de la Hure, which stands in the principal street, had a huge sow's head hanging from a quaint bracket of ornamental ironwork, which projects half-way across the street.

Close by this inn de la Hure there stood, till 1831, the famous tower or towers of Louis d'Outremer, the tower in which Charles of Lorraine took refuge when the town of Laon was treacherously yielded to Hugh Capet by its bishop, Adulberan.

But we were roused from historic memories by the sight of our dark-eyed landlady, who stood just below the ancient sign, beaming with smiles of welcome; though she was in despair at having only one large bedroom to offer.

"It is not my fault, mesdames," she said ingenuously; "it is that of the house, it has only one large chamber."

All this time there stood slightly behind this bright-eyed little woman, but close at her elbow, a most ambiguous-looking creature, wriggling about and twisting his hands together. He was dressed like a

man, but his hands, his voice, and his gestures, were those of a woman. He wore white trousers, a white apron with a bib, and a blouse; he moved as gently and purred as softly as a cat, as he followed upstairs, assuring us that in spite of the smallness of some of the rooms we should find them "Tout-à-fait bien."

We certainly found the rooms clean and comfortable; and we found, too, an excellent luncheon ready before we sallied forth to explore the town.

Not far from our inn we saw the ancient and curious Porte de Chenezelles. The best view of this is to be had from the garden of the photographer.

As we went though the old grass-grown streets to the cathedral, we noticed several quaint signs supported by ornamental ironwork of the same fashion as that dangling from our inn.

It was disappointing to find the grand old building, Notre Dame de Laon, in process of restoration—the interior completely given up to scaffolding and workpeople—but the effect even under these disadvantages was very grand and striking, the total length of the interior being three hundred and thirty-one feet. This church is very severe and pure in style, and is said to have been completed early in the twelfth century. It is also said to have taken two years in building, but the date of much of it is seemingly of the thirteenth century.

Its most striking external features are its four towers, with open lights, two at the west end and two at the transepts. These towers have huge oxen at each corner, said to be placed there to commemorate a pious legend concerning the oxen who dragged uphill the stone and other materials for building the church. The west porch is also very remarkable, much more severe and more simple in character than the exquisite portal of Rheims which we had only left that morning, but still very imposing.

All round the interior of the church is a series of small chapels, with elaborate sixteenth century screens shutting them in from the aisles. We went up into the lower triforium (there are two), and this lower gallery is spacious, making a fine promenade. From it we had a good view of the interior. It is very imposing, and seems in excellent preservation. While we were up in the gallery the master mason showed us a tomb which had been found during the repairs, a kind of stone box, with this inscription :—

"Ici repose Guillaume d'Harségney, médecin de Charles VI., bienfaiteur de la Cathédrale et de la ville de Laon."

The doctor's bones were lying within.

In the sacristy is a curious painting, intended to represent the impression left on the handkerchief of St. Veronica.

Coming out at the west door we went down a street on the left beside the cathedral. We hoped to get a clear view of the building, but it is almost entirely surrounded by houses. However, not far from the door into the transept we saw a striking picture. The grand old towers rise above the tiled roof of a quaint, low, Gothic stone house, which abuts on the church itself. Under a niche at the angle of this house is a sundial. A vine grows luxuriantly over the wall below, in exquisite harmony and contrast with the rich grays and oranges of the old stone wall. We went in at an open door in this range of building, part of which is occupied by the sacristan; we found ourselves in a picturesque little court, one side formed by the side of the cathedral.

Farther on, down the street, Rue du Cloitre, is an interesting old stone building, with pointed gables and three Gothic windows. As we went along we got peeps through arches and doorways of pretty gardens full of green plants and bright flowers.

We found our way up and down, in and out, of narrow grass-grown streets, to what was once an old church of the Templars, a very curious little round building, with a porch or narthex at the west end and a small projecting chancel at the east. It now belongs

to the Frères Chrétiens, and stands in the enclosure of their garden. One of the brothers received us very kindly. He had been busy gathering fruit from a sunny wall, but came cheerfully down the ladder to greet us. He guided us through the pretty garden, one part of which was surrounded by a hedge of golden nasturtiums trained over a trellis, with a tempting plot of artichokes for a centre.

Laon is a perfectly orthodox old French town with regard to paving, and we had been trotting for some time over its round, unevenly set stones, till our feet ached, when all at once we came to a gate surmounted by a green arch formed by some trailing plant, through which showed the prettiest of little gardens. On the left a high wall was green up to its very top with a wealth of varied and graceful leafage —a fig-tree, climbing roses, clematis, and on a shelf among these a gigantic cereus flung down huge knotted limbs, while the garden plot below was at once gay and rich with blossoms. A narrow path divided this in two unequal portions, and led up to the porch of the house. Another bower of choice creeping plants sheltered a double row of blue lilies and deeply coloured carnations, while flame-like gladioli and crimson fuchsias glowed on each side of the path. We all stood still,

longing to enter this little Paradise. It seemed like a fairy tale, when, as we gazed, a pleasant-looking, dark-eyed gentleman came from beneath the bowered porch and smiled at our admiration.

He came forward, and we apologised for staring; upon which he bowed, assured us of his cordial sympathy, and opening the gate, bade us all come in.

He said that he tended his flowers himself, and told us interesting little particulars about them; but when he found that we knew the plants and flowers, and appreciated his precious darlings, his eyes grew brighter still —he was quite excited with delight.

"Ah, mesdames," he cried, "come in, come in, I beg of you; there is something better worth seeing within even than flowers."

With this he led us into a narrow passage, also full of flowers and plants, and flinging open a door at the end of it we saw through the open window opposite, a fine view of the surrounding country lying many feet below. It was like a stage effect, to come suddenly out of the narrow, closely-built street upon this immense vista of far-off plains and hills. But, as we followed our host into a brightly-furnished little room with pictures and gilt mirrors and engravings on the walls, and tables covered with books and gay nicknacks, we saw

through the window that we had reached the edge of the old town, the part built within the walls, and that our polite friend's house stood on the ramparts. Just below us was the picturesque old wall, and on the right the Porte Royer or Ardon, a very interesting gate tower of the thirteenth century, founded on an ancient Roman gateway, of which the foundation-stones still remain in huge uncemented blocks of stone.

When we turned round from the window and the lovely landscape glittering in sunshine, we saw that some one else had come into the room—a tall gray woman, dressed very plainly in black, wearing a large muslin cap tied under her chin. She looked very grave, and seemed like a shadow in the midst of this bright little casket and its green nest; but she smiled amiably when our impromptu host presented her as his mother, in the affectionate filial tone one seems to hear so often from the lips of Frenchmen.

"My mother lives with me," he said, simply. "She helps me to bring up my little daughter, and to take care of my garden."

He sighed and looked grave for an instant, but he was soon smiling again, and expatiating on the charms of his autumn Marguerites. They were just over, but he said they had been most abundant. The old lady

received our compliments on her flowers with a stately and smiling courtesy.

We heard afterwards that he had suffered much from the loss of his wife, who had died a year before. He held an official post in the town.

The bright little episode—not a rare one in pleasant France—had made us forget our fatigue, but after this we were glad to make our way back to the Hôtel la Hure, passing several interesting old relics of the past on our way. Laon had once sixty-three churches and chapels, and a great reputation for sanctity. St. Beat seems to have been its first apostle, about the close of the third century; but two centuries later, St. Remy, Archbishop of Rheims, a native of Laon, baptized Clovis, the pagan husband of St. Clotilda, and obtained from the Frankish king, among other grants, the creation of a bishopric for his native city of Laon.

The city itself is of very ancient origin, and is said undoubtedly to have been built on the site of the famous Bibrax, mentioned by Cæsar as having opposed so formidable a resistance to the army of 300,000 Belgians sent to dislodge the Romans, who were advancing to that part of Gaul.

While we rested at our inn there was a tap at the door, and in answer to our "Entrez," came in the am-

biguous garçon de chambre. His head drooped forward, his shoulders seemed drawn together in a deprecating fashion, and he rubbed his small womanish-looking hands fondly together.

"Madame," he said in his high treble, as he put one hand before his imploring mouth, and gave a little cough—we began to fear some accident must have befallen our luggage,—"Madame, I have come to entreat that you will ring your bell when you want anything; remember, madame, that I am always here, ready to bring you hot water—what do I say? all you wish—I am devoted to your service. Madame, there is the bell-rope. Parfaitement, madame."

He looked so earnest, so tenderly solicitous, that it was very hard not to laugh; with all his kindness and attention he was certainly a trial to our gravity; he went to our friend's room and made her the same devoted offers of service; he met us on the stairs, everywhere indeed, always with the same pathetic entreaty in his face. I think he suffered from a secret consciousness that we should prefer a female chambermaid, and wished he were a woman for our sakes; but he was genuinely kind, and I shall always have a friendly memory of the pathetic-faced chamberman at Laon—a relic of a fashion passing away. When we had rested

we went with our friend to find a poor family she had seen on her previous visit to Laon. It was touching to see the joy and gratitude of husband and wife and children, as they came out and crowded round their benefactress. The eldest boy, an intelligent lad of twelve, went with us as guide when we drove to the abbey church of St. Martin, and then round the town; it takes some time to do this, for the road is cut on the side of the steep descent, and is both rough and dangerous; but the fragments of wall and bits of fortress peeping out among the houses, and garlanded with vines, are most picturesque and interesting. The old wall near St. Martin's is said to have been built from a legacy of Guillaume d'Harségney, whose coffin we had seen in the cathedral.

The abbey buildings of St. Martin are now used for the Hôtel-Dieu. The patients are nursed by Sisters of Charity. Close by is the venerable abbey church; its entrance, much later in style than the rest of the building, has a bas-relief over the portal, in which St. Martin cuts his cloak in two with his sword, so that he may give half to a beggar.

The chancel, the oldest part of the church, is very beautiful, and it is altogether a striking building of the twelfth century, full of good effects of light and shade.

Near the entrance are two very remarkable tombs—one in white marble, that of an abbess of the Convent of Sauvoir sous Laon, said to be Jeanne of Flanders, widow of Enguerrand de Coucy. It was once in the Church of Sauvoir, and was removed and buried in a garden to save it during the Revolution, and then placed in this abbey church. The other, in black Ardennais marble, represents a knight in armour, said to be that of a Sire de Coucy. Tradition relates that a Sire de Coucy having resolved to end his days in prayer, begged permission of the monks of St. Martin to enter their convent. The monks consented on condition that after his death certain lands belonging to him, notably the forest of Samoussy, should be given to them. De Coucy consented, and proceeded to the abbey. Feeling hungry as soon as he arrived, he asked for food, and a couple of eggs, the usual collation of the monks, was served to him. But as soon as he had eaten he fell sick, and soon after died; not, however, till he had executed a deed willing the promised bequest to the monks of St. Martin. But the Sire de Coucy was a Huguenot, and there had not been time to convert him; the monks felt sorely puzzled. The forest of Samoussy and its revenues would be a most welcome addition to their resources, at that time greatly impoverished, but

they were too conscientious to bury a heretic within the church. A chapter was called, and it was decided that the dead nobleman should be buried outside the sacred building. The interment took place. But the dead man had powerful relations, and these, hearing of the deed of the monks of St. Martin, instituted a suit against them which threatened the deprivation of the rich bequest. It was therefore decided to build out this portion of the abbey church, so as to bring the tomb within its walls. This legend is, however, disputed; as the effigy on the tomb is said not to be a De Coucy at all, but probably that of Roger, Lord of Pierrepont and Montaigu, who died in the abbey of St. Martin, after two years of residence, about 1130. The ruin of Château de Coucy, near Laon, is a very fine specimen of a castle of the Middle Ages.

We did not go into the Hôtel-Dieu, though we heard that there is a fine staircase to be seen there. After leaving St. Martin, we drove outside the town, seemingly on the verge of the steep hill, to see the Creuttes de St. Vincent. We passed many fragments of old wall, picturesque with wild plants and vine sprays, and came to a very curious leaning tower called La Tour Penchée, and also Tour de la Dame Eve. The Creuttes are most curious dwellings, scooped in

the side of the rock itself, with earthen fronts. They are said to be of great antiquity, but some of them are evidently still inhabited, for we saw clothes hanging out to dry. Just beyond these singular dwellings we came to the venerable enclosure of the once famous Abbey of St. Vincent, said to have been founded in 590 by Queen Brunehaut. The last remains of this abbey were destroyed in 1794, but much of the wall is unquestionably very old. The road became wider, with trees planted on each side, making pleasant boulevards and charming shaded walks for the townspeople, for the view on all sides is most extensive. Presently we came to a magnificent point; a huge hollow, called La Cuve St. Vincent, divides the portion of hill on which we were from the steep rock on which the cathedral is built. The massive old towers and spire stand up grandly from among the houses and trees, and, with the sweeping curve of the ground in front, make a very striking picture.

Our driver pointed down the valley a little way on, and asked us if we could see a church nestling beside the hill. Yes, we saw a church, and at some distance we made out a village. There seemed to be a tree-shaded walk of some distance between the church and the houses.

"Do you see," our driver pointed with his whip,

"near the church, in the hollow of the hill, a farm-house?"

We looked again; there was certainly a small house standing by itself, with a few trees near it.

Our driver stopped his horses, and turned round so as to look into the carriage.

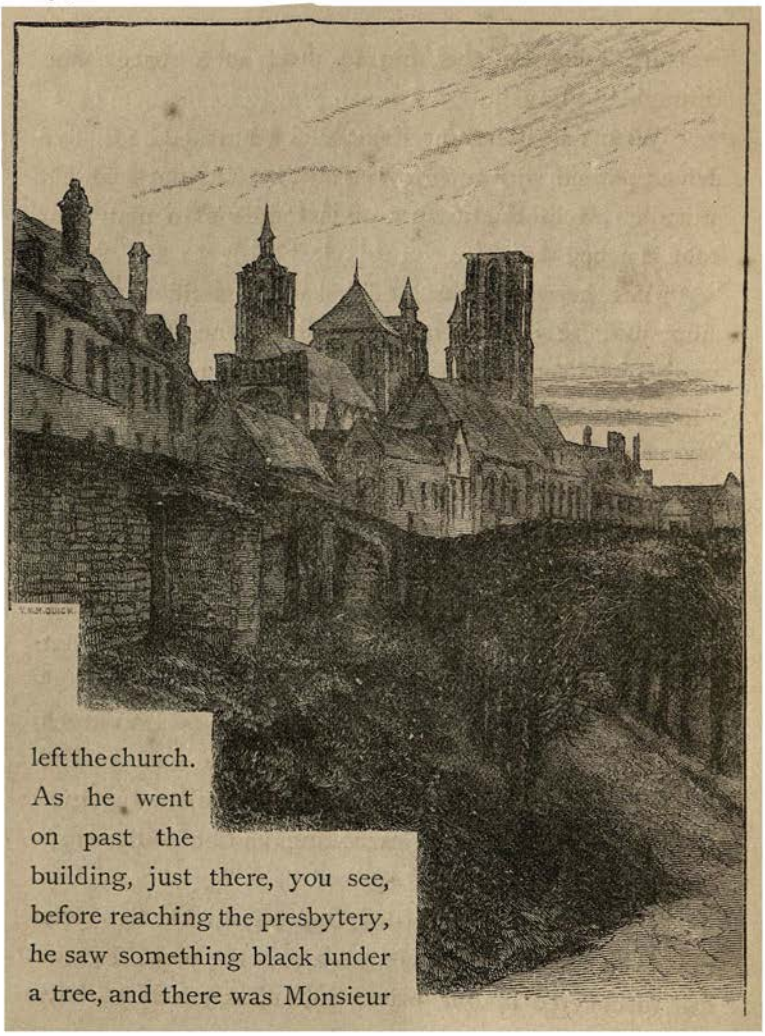
"If mesdames will listen," he said, "I will tell what happened down there a few years ago."

We felt interested, and begged him to go on.

"The mistress of the farm down yonder," he pointed again, "died, and she left only a daughter to take her money. She had another child, a son, but every one had forgotten him. Ah, he was a good-for-nothing! He broke his father's heart, and then he ran away to sea; if any of us remembered him, Dame, it was only to hope that the devil had got his own. Well, mesdames, the old woman died; she had been a good old body, and Monsieur le Curé used to go and see her daughter, and masses were said for the old woman's soul, all as they should be, when one evening, a fortnight after, home comes the good-for-nothing. The sister was frightened; she was alone in the house, and it was long since she had seen the vagabond; she could not tell what he might not have become. 'What do you want?' she asked; 'our mother is dead.' 'I know

that she is dead, and I am come for her hoards,' he said. 'Do you suppose I mean you to keep them? I heard of her death by accident, and I have come many miles to claim my own.' His sister told him he was mistaken; already much of his mother's money had been robbed by him on his last visit to the farm. 'And what was left,' she said, 'I have paid to Monsieur le Curé for the funeral and for masses for our mother.' He swore loudly, and the poor girl said he looked at her like a devil. 'Is this true?' he said. 'I warn you not to tell me a lie.' 'It is as true as that you are here. Do be reasonable, Michel,' she said. 'I have no money for you.' He looked all round, but he could see nothing worth taking; then he ground his teeth, and swore a fearful oath. 'I will settle Monsieur le Curé's reckoning myself,' he said, and he went away.

"Next morning was Sunday, and the girl went as usual to mass at eight o'clock; so did the rest of the villagers. Monsieur le Curé did not leave the building till the little chorister who served had departed. Usually he and the child walked back together to the presbytery. It so happened that one of the villagers wanted to speak to Monsieur le Curé that morning, and came up from the village very soon after the priest had



left the church. As he went on past the building, just there, you see, before reaching the presbytery, he saw something black under a tree, and there was Monsieur

le Curé lying on the ground dead as a stone, shot through the head."

"Was the murderer taken?" we asked, for our driver paused with a sigh; indeed, he had not told his story at all in the matter-of-fact style of a man who told it every day.

"Yes, he was taken, and his sister testified against him, and he was executed. Allez!" he said to his horses, and soon we had left the boulevards, and were again on the narrow rampart of the walled part of the city, looking at the picturesque group formed by the Archbishop's palace, now turned into the Palais de Justice, crowned by the cathedral towers. The entrance into this palace is by an archway near the cathedral; through this we reached the cloister garden. The view of the cathedral is very fine from this point, and the cloister arcade itself is very good; the capitals of the columns are skilfully carved and varied in design. Within the building the *salle* is a disappointment, as it has been divided into courts of justice, but the chapel is very interesting, and so is the crypt below it.

We left Laon next day, impressed with the belief that there was much more to see in the town than we had discovered in our brief visit, and rejoiced to have

added another to our list of quaint and deeply interesting old French cities.

We had parted from our landlady and her strange domestic at the inn door, in the midst of compliments and expressions of goodwill. But we had not seen the last of the man-*femme de chambre.* Just as we were on the point of starting by the train, he came flying into the station, pale, with staring eyes, and out of breath, holding in his hands some artist-materials which one of our party had left behind. He had run all the way down the steep hill with them. At first he could not speak, but when his breath came back, he said, "I would have run farther still, if necessary, to oblige Monsieur."

The last thing we saw was his sensitive, twitching face.

THE END.

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